

# The Historic Architecture of Fort Valley

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## *A Walking - Driving Guide*

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## Fort Valley, circa 1824

The founder of Fort Valley was James A. Everett. Everett established a trading post in the early 1820s at the location where two Indian trails crossed at a point two miles north of the present Fort Valley. On December 7, 1825 Everett established a post office in his settlement, and he was named postmaster. In 1834 he moved the post office to the location of present day Fort Valley.

Ask any long-time resident of Fort Valley about the city's name and you will probably hear the legend of Fox Valley, Georgia. The story goes that *the original name was to be Fox Valley. When the request for the post office was sent in, postal officials could not read Everett's writing and granted the post office to Fort Valley, Crawford County, Georgia.* Fort Valley was actually named for Everett's friend Arthur Fort.

Fort Valley was granted incorporation as a city in Georgia on March 3, 1856.

In the early 1920s, local officials petitioned the Georgia Legislature to create Peach County from parts of Houston and Macon Counties. Peach County was officially established in 1925. It was the last county created in Georgia and it is the smallest county in the state.

Trains have been important to the development of Fort Valley. The Southwestern Railroad came to Fort Valley in 1851 with an eye on the cotton industry. By 1860, 30 percent of Georgia's cotton came from areas served by the Southwestern Railroad and by the Central of Georgia Railroad.

The ability to ship peaches via rail and then the development of refrigerated rail cars advanced the peach industry into the 20th Century. By 1922 almost one-third of all Georgia peaches were shipped from Fort Valley.

Historic homes in Fort Valley were built between the 1860s and the 1950s. The graduaire of the many historic homes is evidence of the economic success of Fort Valley. Peaches, trains, cotton, and Blue Bird are all part of the making of Fort Valley.

Fort Valley has two distinctive historic districts – *The Everett Square District* and the *Downtown/Railroad District*. These historic districts are combined in this tour guide in a form that facilitates driving with only a few changes of direction. In addition there are historic sites in the Fort Valley State University area and then a collection of sites that are outside of the two districts and the FVSU area.

*Cover art designed by Robert Bradshaw*

# Everett Square/Historic District

## 1. Troutman House - 201 Oakland Heights Parkway

The Troutman House, circa 1870, is an example of Greek Revival style of architecture. More specifically, it is Vernacular Greek Revival, and it is one of the largest homes of the era still standing in Fort Valley. Originally, the house sat about three thousand feet south of its present location facing what is now East Main Street. After the original owner, Colonel John Feilding Troutman, Sr., died in 1905, his son had the home moved to its present location.



The Georgia Peach Blossom Festivals held from 1922 to 1926 were actually held on the grounds of the Troutman house. Recently renovated, the home now houses the Peach County Chamber of Commerce, the Peach County Development Authority, the Downtown Development Authority, MainStreet, and the Georgia Peach Festival offices.

## 2. Bassett-Jones House - 103 Commercial Heights



Built in the 1860s, the Bassett-Jones House is a reflection of the importance of the railroads to Fort Valley. It sat across the street from the Bassett Hotel. It currently is being rehabilitated to serve as a law office for Jones and Oliver.

## 3. Jolly Nut Company - 100 Commercial Heights

This building is believed to have been built in the late 1800s and housed a steam engine driven grist mill. At one time it was home to a Texaco Oil business and once served as a Cull House for a Peach Packing Shed in an adjacent building. Most of the furnishings are from various old places such as mercantile shops and cotton gins. When you visit, be sure to see “800 Proved Pecan Recipes,” a delightful cookbook published in 1925.



#### **4. Old Jail House - Jail House Alley**

The Peach County Jail building was the only government building to be built outside of the immediate downtown area. It served as the jail for the county until the new building was built off GA 96 East. The Peach County Emergency Medical Services now occupy the building.



#### **5. Fort Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Plant - 215 N. Camellia Blvd**

Built on the outskirts of what was then Fort Valley, The Coca-Cola Bottling Plant served as a manufacturing plant for Coke and Coke products from the 1930s until the 1960s. After the plant stopped producing products, it continued as a distribution point for products.



#### **6. Duke-Pensyl Home - 205 Anderson Avenue**

This English Tudor style home was built by Mr. & Mrs. Jon David Duke. It was completed in 1934. Mr. Duke was a well known peach farmer. The architect was Ellamore Ellis League of Macon. The home was sold to John Pensyl, a retired USAF Colonel in 1980 by the Annie Lee Snow Duke Estate. Col. Pensyl continues to keep the gardens created by Annie Duke.



#### **7. Mathews-Wilder Home - 104 Persons Street**

This lavish home was built by a northerner, A. S. Martin, who came to Fort Valley to run a foundry. In 1903 Superior Court Judge Henry A. Mathews bought the house and it remained in the family until 2008.



The most notable features are the decorative elements in the herkinhead gable, narrow vertical siding, decorative cutwork, saw tooth detailing, and whimsical appliqué. The Mansard roofed porch features turned columns and railing. The finial topping the porch gable is accented by a wooden coat of arms.

#### **8. Bassett-Gillespie-Lambert Home – 117 Anderson Avenue**

This elegant Georgian Cottage house was built circa 1890s, by Stephen Hicks Bassett, son of Stephen Elisha Bassett of Taylor's Mill Road. The home was sold by S.H. Bassett to B.H. Watson. The Watson family occupied the home until 1941 when Kitty Watson Clark sole heir, sold the home to Robert & Dean Gillespie,



two brothers who purchased this center hall style house to share with their wives. Dean Gillespie served on the Fort Valley City Council.

Ralph & Kathie Lambert purchased the home in 2006. The Lambert's have renovated and restored the home to a one family home keeping many of the original columns, mantels, bead board , trim and restored the original tin roof. The large wraparound porch is one of the home's most wonderful features.

### **9. Fort Valley Police Department - corner of West Church Street and Anderson Avenue**

Built in 1932, this Classical Revival structure exceeds the usual decorative elements of government buildings. The structure was built for a post office at a cost of \$60,000. The limestone columns are accented by Corinthian capitals with Wedgewood insets. The cornice features green and gold detailing and the fanlight with egg and dart molding is accented by green, blue and peach inlay work. The granite steps lead to a lobby of pink Georgia marble.



### **10. Peach County Court House - 205 W. Church Street**

The Peach County Court House was built in 1936 to serve the people of Georgia's newest county. Originally, the second floor of the Austin Theater was used as the court house. The two-story building was partially destroyed by fire in 1969. At that time, the Thomas Public Library was housed in the south end of the building. That part of the building sustained the most damage. It was renovated in the early 1970s after the fire and again in the late 1990s.



### **11. Brown-Nichols Home - 212 W. Church Street**

This Neo-Classical house was originally an unpretentious two-story house, built by Dr. W. H. Hollingshed after 1866. Superior Court Judge L. L. Brown bought it in 1903. He moved the house back from the street and added the side and front



porches along with the Ionic columns. The small outbuilding, one of Fort Valley's oldest brick structures, was built of brick made on this site. The house is now occupied by Judge Brown's granddaughter, Cornelia, and her husband, W. C. Nichols.

**12. Wright-Freshwater Home - 217 W. Church Street**

This home was built in 1922 by W. C. Wright, a local druggist and peach farmer. The cost to build the house was \$125,000. Wright, unfortunately, died two weeks before he and his family were to move into his new house. In 1958 the property was bought for the headquarters of the local Women's Club. It is now home to great-grandson Frank Freshwater and his wife Connie Rainey.



The house is in the Italian Renaissance style, with a low pitched roof covered by "Ludowici-Celedon 'Imperial' Shale Roofing tiles".

**13. Fort Valley United Methodist Church - 301 W. Church Street**

This church was founded in 1835 and was known as the Old Pond Methodist Church. It was originally located out Highway 341 north of town. In 1848, the congregation built a new church on Everett Square. In 1902 the congregation sold that property and built the sanctuary. The addition of the Sunday School rooms came in 1918. The church is typical Methodist architecture for the period. Note the beautiful stained glass windows.



**14. Thweat-Brown Home - 305 W. Church Street**

Harriet Rebecca Long Johnson built this two-story clapboard house circa 1863. In 1975, Milton and Ann Blair Brown restored it in the Federal Style. During renovation the two parlor walls were found to have been lined with the Southern Confederacy, Macon Telegraph and Chattanooga Sentinel newspapers all from 1864. The front windows are unusual pairs of long single panes per sash separated by a slender pilaster. The home is presently owned by Blair Brown.



**15. Skellie-Orr-Stumbo Home - 314 W. Church Street**

In 1888 A. D. Skellie purchased a small house on this property for \$1,758. Mr. Skellie reconstructed a much larger house. In 1912, the house was purchased from the



Skellie estate for \$7,500, which indicated the amount of renovation that had been done. The L-shaped addition and placement of the Tuscan columns at the extreme right of the facade are unusual in Neo-Classical style houses. Miss Wilma Orr's father purchased the house in the early 1900s. Miss Wilma, who is fondly remembered, was very active in both the UDC and the DAR, inherited the home and lived there until her death.

**16. Hatcher - Lambert Home - 316 West Church Street**

Originally built in 1922, the home was sold to Felton W. Hatcher in 1937 or 1938. The Hatcher family used one of the door facings in the main hallway to track the growth of their three daughters. These markings are still visible. Ralph and Kathie Lambert bought the home in 2002. It took them almost two years to renovate, but throughout the renovations, they took care to preserve the special features of the home, many of which are characteristic of the early 1900s structures.



**17. Fincher-Adamson Home - 101 Everett Square**

This Queen Anne style house was built in 1882 by J. L. Fincher.



Most notable is the porch gable that is adorned with painted rope scrolls and the multi-pane stain glass window.

In 1890 Fincher filled the unexpired term of Mayor Riley. He held the office again from 1904-1910. Mr. Fincher was a jeweler by profession. He and his son, George, built the first automobile in town. Their home was also the first dwelling in Fort Valley to receive electricity. The triangle downtown is named Fincher Park in his memory.

**18. Everett Square**

This park-like area has been known as The Schoolyard, Church Square, Beauty Square and, finally, the name by which it is now called, Everett Square. James Abingdon Everett, founder of Fort Valley, and Mathew Dorsey, fellow land speculator, gave six acres to the trustees of the Fort Valley Academy in 1836 for the purpose of building a school and a church. The academy was built on the south end in 1836 and the Fort Valley Methodist Church was built in the center in 1848. The Methodist Church moved to a new location in 1902.



A two-story school was then built on the property in 1912-1913. The school was razed and a new school was built on the site in the 1950s. That building no longer stands. The space now serves as a war memorial to soldiers of all wars.

**19. Hartley-Foster Home - 102 Everett Square**

The Hartley home was built in the mid 1880's on the property of James A Everett , founder of Fort Valley by Edwin and Nina



Hartley (granddaughter of Mr. Everett). Their son, Warren Sanford Hartley, married Sallie Lou and on their wedding day she moved into the home with him and his mother . The Hartley family lived in the home until 1976. The house is of Swedish design and has only one chimney for the six fireplaces.

**20. Greene-Davidson Home - 204 Everett Square**

This house, one of Fort Valley's oldest, was built by Peter Greene before 1850. The front entrance with curved transom and rectangular side-lights is the most interesting feature of the house. The one-story porch, "Victorianized" since the house was built, has lovely detail. Occupied since 1930 by descendents of J. E. Davidson, Peach County's first state representative.



**21. Greene-Hedgpeth Home - 201 Everett Square**

Alba Beaufort Greene bought the land for this house in 1890 and built this Eastern "Stick Style" Victorian house soon afterward. It has many interesting features, including the diagonal braces, carved bargeboards in the gables, the bay window and a pierced porch railing.



Mr. Greene was Mayor of Fort Valley from 1916-1918. He served in the State Legislature.

**22. Harris-Lanter Home - 407 College Street**

H. C. Harris built this house before 1880 on the lot across the street. He had the house moved so that he could build his three story mansion which has since burned. Harris' construction company built many of the brick buildings downtown to replace wooden ones destroyed in an 1867 fire. In 1881 he built the Harris House

Hotel that sat on Main Street facing the railroad. As major stockholder in the Atlanta and Florida Railroad, Harris lost all his money when the railroad went bankrupt in 1887.

The house has three gables with two bay windows.



### **23. Thomas-Jennings Home - 312 College Street**

Dr. E. G. Thomas, a local dentist built this home circa 1914.



As her husband's receptionist, Lula Thomas began lending books from her private collection to patients. In 1915, representatives of local civic groups met in the front room of the Thomas' home to form the Fort Valley Library Association,

which was to become the Thomas Public Library.

The house is of a Colonial Revival style.

### **24. Houser-Dankel Home - 310 College Street**

The Queen Anne and revival style house was built by Clarence Withoft of Dayton, Ohio. Mr. Withoft was an investor in and manager of peach orchards for the Ohio Fruitland Co. as well as postmaster in Fort Valley. The Withofts lived in the home for only a short time before selling it to John A. Houser II, grandson of Capt. John A. Houser of the Georgia Militia, the



first Georgia Group to offer its services to the Confederacy. The house was the first one in town to be built with indoor plumbing. Of particular interest in the house is its fine heart pine woodwork and gas/electric light fixtures. It was the first house to be built on College Street after they knew that electricity would be available. The carbide gas portion of the fixtures was used until the electricity was run, as well as during the times when the electricity was unavailable. Mrs. Houser was a camellia fancier, and her camellias remain in the yard. The plants were planted by next-door neighbor, Mr. David Strother, benefactor of Masse Lane Camellia Gardens in Marshallville. Costumes for the early Peach Festival plays were stored in the attic of the house.

### **25. Rumph-Windham Home - 306 College Street**

Samuel Rumph, the founder of the Georgia Peach industry, built this house for his mother, Caroline, in 1894. This house has

features from several different styles of the Victorian period. The end and front cross gables were used in many Queen Anne houses. The shingles, curved windows of the gables, and dormers were frequently used in Shingle style houses.



## **26. Woolfolk-Cleveland Home - 304 College Street**

This 1850's structure was part of the Fort Valley Female Seminary, chartered in 1852. During the Civil War the Georgia Blind Asylum occupied the house. After the war the asylum moved to Macon and became the Academy for the Blind. In 1880, the Fort Valley Academy moved into the house with 24 boys and girls with a live-in headmaster, Professor Thomas B. Russell. J. W. Woolfolk bought the house in 1912, renovated the house and added the porches and the brick veneer. Five generations of the Woolfolk family have lived here. The brick quoins at the corners of the structure are commonly found on Italianate and Italian Renaissance Revival style houses.



## **27. Riley-Humble Home - 303 College Street**

This house seems to have been built circa 1880 by Charlie Marshall. In 1882, Judge A. C. Riley, Sr. of Perry bought the house. He was mayor of Fort Valley from 1888-1890. He lived there until his death. A.C. Riley, Jr. who was Mayor in 1922-1924 and 1932-1942 also lived there.



The front and side gables of this house are covered with decorative sawed wood shingles in various patterns popular in the Victorian era. The one-story porch has delicately turned wooden porch supports and spindle work ornamentation. Note the stars that mark all of the windows and doors.

## **28. Evans-Cantrell House - 301 College Street**

A.J. Evans built this Italian Renaissance Revival style house in 1916. The eclectic architectural style features Colonial Revival influenced porches and Craftsman-influenced eaves and windows. The house is also known for the use of Classical detailing throughout the structure. Grady Institute, the first white public school in Fort Valley, originally stood on this site.



Influential in the peach industry, Evans was known as the “Peach King” in the early part of the twentieth century. As a peach broker in the 1920s, he controlled the price of peaches on the Eastern seaboard. Although he lost his fortune in the Depression, he was able to rebuild his business a second time.

**29. First Baptist Church** - *corner of College and Miller Streets*

This church was organized in 1852 with seven members. The congregation first met in a warehouse. The first church building was a wooden structure that faced Miller Street. The present building was begun in 1936 after the church burned. An expansion in the 1990s added much needed social hall space to the building.



**30. Harris-Hunter Home** - *200 Miller Street*



This Colonial Revival style house showcases its Ionic columns with a center portico spanning two stories. It was built around 1913. The home sits on ground that was part of the first public school in Fort Valley, the Grady Institute.

**31. McArthur-Saxon House** - *201 Miller Street*

This house is now the headquarters of the Peach County Historical Society. It was built circa 1850 by Captain James Miller, a local prominent plantation owner. The house was later bought by Charles Z. McArthur who was a peach farmer and dentist.



Many changes were made to the house in the 1890s. In 1987, the Saxon family, McArthur’s grandchildren, donated the house to the local historical society.

**32. Fort Valley Presbyterian Church** - *207 Central Avenue*



The Presbyterian Church was established in 1872 with 14 members. Services were first held in a local hotel. Over time the Presbyterians moved to three other locations before this 1916 structure was built.

The church has arched stained glass windows. The front doors, framed by a rounded pediment and semi-circular stained glass fanlight, create a welcoming entrance through the corner steeple.

**33. St. Andrew's Episcopal Church - 309 Central Ave.**

The first Episcopal missionary was assigned to Fort Valley in 1880. The first chapel was built in 1897 by English parishioner George Harrison, a cabinet maker. After he finished the chapel, Harrison was given the privilege of giving the building its name. He chose to honor his old parish church in England, St. Andrew's, located in Middlesex. In 1920 the chapel was replaced with the present structure. Timbers from the chapel were included in the building.



**34. Wright-Butler Home -**  
*103 Miller Street*

George P. Wright built this Craftsman or Bungalow-style house in 1922. The home has a center courtyard. It resembles his father's large house next door.

**35. Greene-Worthington Home - 114 Knoxville Street**

This house, built circa 1880, has an L-shaped plan with end gables and a cross gable, popular during Victorian times. The curved porch has decorative spindle work on both the upper and lower floors which is unusual.



George P. Greene, a local druggist, paid \$250 for this land in 1875. The only change to the exterior of the house is a bedroom added before 1940.

**36. Persons-Landers Home - 201 Knoxville Street**



This stucco over brick home was built by the Reverend George Persons circa 1850. Reverend Persons was a Methodist preacher who, over the years, served several circuits. He owned a home on the Flint River, but that house apparently burned. In the early to mid 1840s he moved to Fort Valley, joined the Fort Valley Methodist Church and lived in a small house on Knoxville Street while his house was under construction. It is believed by some that the house was begun in 1843 and that all the bricks used in the house were made by slaves on the site. In 1851, Persons paid the James Everett estate \$7,000 for this 18-acre property, a significant price which indicates that the house was already built. In 1866 David Houser bought the house and reversed

the front hall staircase to the rear to prevent young gentlemen callers from seeing his daughter's ankles as they descended the stairs.

**37. Luce-Stumbo Home – 305 Knoxville Street**

The house at 305 Knoxville Street was built by Mr. A.L. Luce, Sr., founder of Blue Bird - the largest manufacturer of school buses in America, in 1927 for his widowed sister, Mrs. Robert Stewart and her four children. Mr. and Mrs. Luce moved into it in 1942. Mr. Luce died in 1962, and Mrs. Luce continued to live there until her death in 1976. It is now owned by their granddaughter, Helen Rhea Luce Stumbo.



**38. Fort Valley High School - Knoxville St.**

Fort Valley High School home of the *Green Waves* served Fort Valley students from the early 1930s until 1974. Over the life of the building, it saw a wide variety of class levels taught at the institution. In 1970-71, it became the high school building for the entire county, both black and white students. Over the years, additions were added including a wing that still houses the Board of Education. Anderson field was directly behind the building. The Fort Valley State University is renovating it to be the home of The FVSU's College of Business.



**39. Woolfolk Building - corner of Camellia Blvd. & Main St.**

This building was built about 1920 by J. W. Woolfolk. The signature of the Woolfolk Building is a stone cartouche featuring a "W". Originally built as a one-story grocery, a second story was added for a pharmacy by 1930. The facade was remodeled to include the iron balconies and decorative brackets.



**40. Evans Building - corner of Camellia Boulevard and Main Street.**

This three story commercial brick building was built by A. J. Evans around 1910. Evans was a local peach farmer and businessman. The first floor was once home of the Citizens Bank. The second floor was used as rental office space and the third floor was a gymnasium. The building was constructed by Gresham Construction Company of Griffin, Georgia. Marking the occupancy of the Citizens



Bank is the leaded glass transoms and fanlights that retain the letters “CB.” The building is now owned by Fort Valley State University. The university has renovated the building for offices.

**41. Austin Theater - South Main Street**

The Austin Theater building was bought in 1915 by George Hiley Slappey. Originally a dry goods store, it was converted to a theater in 1916 with the addition of a second floor theater. The building housed movies, plays and civic events. It served in 1925 as the first Peach County courthouse. In 1934 it was leased to the Martin-Thomas theater chain and operated as a movie theater until 1968. It was converted to a department store which closed in the mid-1970s. The building sat empty until donated to the Downtown Develop Authority by Marion Allen. It was renovated in 2004 with SPLOST money. Today it is used for theater productions, conferences and conventions.



**42. Avera Drug Store - 111 East Main St.**

Avera is Fort Valley’s oldest business and the oldest drug store in continuous operation in Georgia.

It was begun in 1870 by Mathews and Green. Over the years, many pharmacy students received training at Avera.

It has operated as Avera’s since 1941.



**43. H.V. Kell Building - corner of Camellia Blvd. and College St.**

The building was constructed around 1912 for the H.V. Kell Company which was a chain grocery-hardware store. Note the stenciled advertising which was used extensively in the 19th and early 20th centuries but rarely survives today. The building is being remodeled to be FVSU’s Mass



Communications department.

**44. Anthoine Machine Shop - 311 Railroad St**

The Anthoine Machine Shop is the second oldest continuous running business in Peach County. It was established in 1885. It is one of the only machine shops in Georgia using line shafts.





## Trains

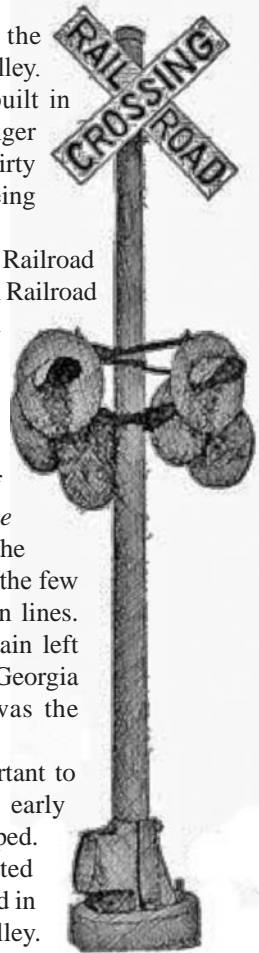
Trains have been a part of the economics of Fort Valley almost since the very beginning. Fort Valley's founding father James A. Everett, a cotton grower, became one of the first supporters of the Southwestern Railroad in 1845. In 1851, no doubt due to Everett's influence, the Southwestern was extended from Macon to Fort Valley and on to Oglethorpe. A leg of the Macon and Western had already been established from Macon to Atlanta.

In 1853 the Southwestern was extended from Fort Valley to Reynolds and Columbus. Later the Southwestern was taken over by the Central of Georgia.

Everett gave the land and much of the funding for the first freight depot in Fort Valley. After a fire, the current building was built in 1871. That station served as both a passenger terminal and a freight depot. By 1860, thirty percent of Georgia's cotton crop was being handled by the Southwestern Railroad.

Another line, the Atlanta and Florida Railroad came to Fort Valley in 1888. The Southern Railroad eventually took over the A&F line in bankruptcy. The Southern and the Central of Georgia railroads brought as many as 15 passenger trains to Fort Valley each day. The present day passenger depot was an outgrowth of the heyday of passenger service. Two majestic hotels - *the Winona and the Basset* - grew up around the passenger traffic. Fort Valley was one of the few points that passengers could change train lines. The last Southern Railroad passenger train left Fort Valley in 1947. The last Central of Georgia passenger train to leave Fort Valley was the Flamingo in 1963.

The railroads and peaches were important to the development of Fort Valley. In the early 1880s, 187 train cars of peaches were shipped. Thanks to the development of refrigerated cars, over one-third of the peaches shipped in Georgia in 1922 shipped through Fort Valley. That total was 3003 train cars loads of peaches.



## The Fort Valley Railroad District

Fort Valley is unique in that three historic railroad buildings - the Passenger Depot, the Freight Depot, and the Signal Station are within just a few feet of each other. Fort Valley is the only city in Georgia where all three of these major railroad buildings are still in existence.

### 45. Passenger Depot - *Railroad Street*

The first train came through Fort Valley in 1852. When the first passenger train arrived on August 16, 1888, it consisted of the locomotive, a baggage and mail car, and two passenger coaches. Over the years a number of rail lines have serviced Fort Valley. The last passenger service was by the "Flamingo" in 1963. Large paired wooden brackets accent the eaves of this building. The mammoth wooden doors on the depot lift straight up, utilizing wheels and pulleys.



### 46. Freight Depot - *corner of Main Street and Railroad Street*

The Civil War, peaches, cotton, and a variety of railroad liveries together set the path for the future of Fort Valley. In the late 1860's the area around Fort Valley was the number one cotton producing area in Georgia. Entire train loads of peaches in refrigerated cars regularly left Fort Valley for destinations around the nation. Later, shipments of sand from the Atlantic Sand Company in Crawford County kept the depot and its staff busy. Passengers loaded from the building in early days.



### 47. Signal Building - *corner of Main Street and Railroad Street*

The Signal/Inlocken Tower was constructed in the 1910s. It is very much the same architecture as much of Downtown Fort Valley, although Lowe Street separates it from the rest of downtown. The building has two distinct areas, downstairs and upstairs. The bottom level functioned as a restaurant for tourist riding the trains. The second floor was used as a telegraph office. The structure stands as one of the last Signal building still in existence in Georgia. In recent years, the building has been renovated for commercial space.



## Other Sites Outside of the Historic District

- *County wide*

### 48. Oaklawn Cementery - *Hghway 49 South*

**48 a. Gravesite of James Abington Everett** who was the founder of Fort Valley circa 1825. Everett (1788-1848) named the town after his friend, Arthur Fort, a Revolutionary War hero and Georgia legislator. Everett was responsible for bringing the railroad through Fort Valley. He was also a great philanthropist often giving land to the local community for the building of a school or church. He also helped save Wesleyan College of Macon from going under during the economic depression of the 1830s. A devote Methodist, he insisted the college keep the name of Wesleyan after the founder of Methodism, John Wesley.



### 48 b. Confederate Memorial site - *Oaklawn Cementery*

This plot marks the graves of about 20 Confederate soldiers who died in Fort Valley’s “war hospitals”. Other soldiers buried at this site were killed in a train wreck outside of town.

### 48 c. Gravesite of Albert L. Luce, founder of Blue Bird Bus Company.

### 49. Masee Lane Gardens - *Highway 49 South*

Home of the American Camellia Society, Masee Lane is on the National Register of Historic Places. It was originally part of a large plantation deeded to Needham Masee following the Land Lottery Act of 1827. David Strother purchased part of the plantation in the early 1900s after coming to Fort Valley from Walhalla, South Carolina in 1903. The first camellias were planted on Mr. Strother’s farm in 1936. He developed the gardens for his enjoyment and that of visitors. In 1965, Mr. Strother donated his famous camellia gardens and surrounding farmland to the American Camellia Society. Over the years the gardens have expanded and become a popular tourist destination filled with year-round color. Points of interest include the authentic Japanese garden, acres of beautiful camellias, and the world’s largest privately owned Boehm porcelain collection on public display.



### 50. Everett-Green Home - *300 Northwoods Dr.*

James A. Everett, founder of Fort Valley, built this home about 1834. It originally sat on Highway 341 north of Fort Valley. It was

moved to its present site in 1982.

This two-story Plantation type home was renovated and its historic integrity preserved by Judge G. Bryant Culpepper and family. The structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Homes.



**51. Bassett-Knight Home - 1195 Taylor's Mill Rd. - Pinella Farms**



This Victorian style house was built in the mid 1800's by the Bassett family as their plantation home to manage the farm which consisted of more than a thousand acres. The Victorian trim work, porches and rooms at the rear of the house were added in the late 1800's. The Bassett family owned

the property from the mid 1800's until 1973. The property was given the name Pineola by Henriette Bassett because of the majestic longleaf pines in the front yard.

**The Fort Valley State University District - State University Drive**

The Fort Valley State University's origin goes back to the Fort Valley High and Industrial School started in 1895 and the State Teachers and Industrial School of Forsyth founded in 1902. The State Teachers and Agricultural became part of the University System of Georgia a in 1932. Both schools were consolidated in 1939 as Fort Valley State College. It became a University in 1996. It continues to operate as Georgia's only 1890's Land Grant College.



The historic area of FVSU resides around the quadrangle on the main campus where several of the school founders are buried. Many of the original buildings have the names of individuals or church groups who funded the buildings. The University is currently restoring several of these historic buildings.



Several other buildings and local churches off campus are included in the historic area.

## 52. Henry Alexander Hunt Burial Site - *FVSU Campus*

H. A. Hunt was the second principal of Fort Valley High and Industrial School which is now Fort Valley State University. He dedicated 34 years of his life to the school. He and his wife, Florence, did much to advance education for Blacks in the first three decades of the twentieth century. In 1930 he received the Spingarn Medal for his outstanding service as a Black educator.



## 53. Huntington Hall - *FVSU Campus*

This structure was built in 1907 with money donated by Collis P. Huntington, a railroad financier. It was one of the first buildings erected at Fort Valley High & Industrial School, now Fort Valley State University.



## 54. Anderson House - *FVSU Campus*



This house was originally the home of F. W. Gano, a white man who came south to champion human rights for Blacks during reconstruction. He became one of the founders of Fort Valley High & Industrial School. The house was also the home of three school presidents. More recently

the building has become the Heritage Museum for the campus. It contains the Alphonso Biggs collection of period furniture from 1860 -1900.

## 55. St. Luke Episcopal Church - *1000 State College Drive*

This church was erected in 1939. It was in 1958 that St. Luke's Episcopal Church became the official name. A prayer at the entrance to the sanctuary reads "Whosoever thou art that enterest this Church, leave it not without prayer to GOD for thyself, for those who minister, and for those who worship here."



**56. Usher's Temple C.M.E. Church - 411 Railroad Street**

Usher's Temple was the first "free" Black church in Fort Valley. The presiding pastor at the time was Rev. J. H. Usher. The first church on this site was constructed in 1880. The present building was erected in 1959.



**57. H.A. Hunt High School - 600 Spruce Street**

Hunt High School was built in 1953 and 1954. It was named for Henry Alexander Hunt, second principal of Fort Valley & Industrial School. The late Dr. H. E. Bryant was principal of Hunt High for many years and saw the school through integration. A bust of Professor Bryant stands on the grounds. The High School served for many years as the teaching laboratory for Fort Valley State College's Education program. It continued as the school for the Black community until 1970 when total integration was achieved. For the next few years, it served as an elementary school for all students in Fort Valley and the south end of Peach County. The complex is now county owned. The gym became Hunt Educational and Cultural Center.



**58. Fagan-Hendricks House - 46 Camp John Hope Road**

Built circa 1917, this structure was the hub for J.D. Fagan Farms. Through a long string of owners, including Fagan as the first and third owner, Fort Valley State College bought the property and the farm land in 1989. It currently houses the Agricultural Technology Conference Center. With over 10,000 square feet, the ACTT includes the original 1900's style house and an additional banquet/conference area and kitchen.



The colonial-style two-story house has been restored to its original beauty with its original pine floors and knotted pine ceilings (*upstairs*) taken from pine trees on the farm.



## *Peaches*

Peaches have been an important part of Fort Valley for well over 125 years. Peaches were so important the county was

named for the Georgia Peach!

When settlers came to Virginia in the 1700s, peaches were awaiting them. Franciscan monks introduced peaches to Georgia in 1571 on St. Simmons and Cumberland islands. In 1870 Samuel H. Rumph, a Marshallville peach farmer, introduced the Elberta Peach to Georgia. Elbertas are still considered the best tasting fruit of the season. Today, Georgia produces over 40 varieties of peaches for shipment.

The introduction of the railroad to Fort Valley greatly advanced the peach industry by providing rail transportation for quick shipment of the fruit. Fort Valley's freight depot served as short term storage for peaches waiting for transit. Rumph advanced the peach industry even more with his design of the refrigerated box car. His design, which he gave to the railroads for them to manufacture, may have been the single most important advancement for the peach industry.

By the 1920s, the Georgia peach was so important to the economy of Georgia and Fort Valley, local citizens petitioned the state to establish a new county named for the Georgia Peach. A series of Georgia Peach Festivals in the early 1920s were staged to show state officials that the residents of Fort Valley could handle the challenge of a new county. The Georgia Legislature approved Peach County and it was established in 1925.

In the heyday of Fort Valley peach production there were as many as 40 working peach packing sheds. The sheds were dependent on the railroads for shipments of supplies into the sheds and peaches out of the sheds. Almost every shed was built directly beside the tracks. Almost always, each farmer had his own packing shed which allowed him to pay his workers as farm laborers.

Those 40 sheds in the 1950s and 1960s faded to only one operating shed in Peach County by the 1990s. Historic sheds dot the county's countryside. Today there are only four sheds within about 30 miles of Fort Valley. In the late 1920s, over eight million bushels of peaches were shipped from Georgia. Production has now dropped to about 2.6 million bushels.

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### *Credits*

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