Walking TOUR

Johnston County Heritage Center
FREE OF ADMISSION CHARGE
9:00-5:00 Monday-Saturday
241 East Market Street, Smithfield NC 27577
tel: 919-934-2836
e-mail: heritagecenter@johnstonnc.com

PARKING
Two-hour parking is allowed along adjacent streets. Free all-day parking is available in nearby off-street lots, the largest of which sits behind the Public Library on the east side of North Third Street.

johnstonnc.com/heritage

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1. Heritage Center
2. Early Post Office/Print Shop
3. Masonic Lodge
4. Antebellum Medical Office/Post-Civil War Residence
5. Barnes-Grady House
6. Smith & Tefair Home Site
7. Smith’s Ferry Site
8. Bridge Abutment
9. American Legion Hut
10. Hastings House
11. Primitive Baptist Church
12. Riverside Cemetery
13. St. Paul’s Episcopal Church/Baptist Church Site
14. Myatt-Sanders House
15. Congressman Edward W. Pou’s Law Office
16. Centenary United Methodist Church
17. Courthouse
18. Bingham House
19. Freedmen’s Schoolhouse

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Tour Route
Roads/Streets
Parking
Food/Dining
Tour Structures
Church
Cemetery
Walking TOUR

Start Here

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Johnston County Heritage Center

Originally the Bank of Smithfield, this Neo-classical building was constructed in 1913 and housed the corporate offices of First Citizens Bank until the 1970s. Since 2000 it has been the home of the Johnston County Heritage Center, a library and museum where local citizens and visitors from across the nation come to research genealogy and local history.

2. Early Post Office/Print Shop
Judge W. J. Stevens had this prominent brick office building built in 1904. It served as the town’s post office until about 1928 and was also headquarters of The Smithfield Herald until 1924.

3. Masonic Lodge
This Greek Revival building, constructed 1854-1855 by Fellowship Masonic Lodge 844, was built in the temple form, with an elliptical arched ceiling on the upper floor where the Masons held their meetings. It was moved to its current location in about 1913 by attorney E. H. Brooks to serve his law office.

4. Antebellum Medical Office/Post-Civil War Residence
Dr. Alexander F. Telfair built the original Greek Revival two-room block of this structure prior to 1850 when he formed a medical practice with Dr. John R. Thompson of Raleigh. According to family history, Dr. Thompson was given a walking stick by local citizens in appreciation for his service to the community as a physician during the Civil War. This house has both Greek Revival and Italianate fenestration, reflecting the architectural tastes of the 1840s and 1870s.

5. Barnes-Grady House
This house and the next door were built about 1885 by attorney Patrick T. Massey. This house was given to Massey’s daughter Helen Massey Barnes and son-in-law Turner Barnes. Embedded in the ground near the street in front of the house is a hatching ring that was once used to secure horses.

6. Massey-Wilson House/Smith and Telfair Home Site
P. T. Massey built this handsome Italianate house in 1885 on the knoll where the families of town founder John Smith and Dr. Alexander F. Telfair formerly lived. Massey was the county’s most influential Republican politician in the late 19th century. He served as Clerk of Superior Court during Reconstruction and later as a U.S. tax collector, raising numerous illicit liquor stills in the area.

7. Smith’s Ferry Site
The Smith family operated a ferry here 1760-1786. Count minutes from 1760 show it cost four pence for man and horse to cross, six pence for an empty cart, one to two shillings for empty and loaded wagons. The home of town founder John Smith, Jr., was built on the knob overlooking the ferry. After moving to Tennessee in the 1780s his sons-in-law John Allen and William Bridgers ran the ferry.

8. Bridge Abutment
John Allen built the first of many bridges here in about 1786, and travelers had to pay a toll to cross. In 1856, Revolutionary Confederate soldiers burned a covered bridge on this site to slow the movement of Union forces, and county commissioners later contracted with African American men named Bryant Aldorf to rebuild it. The covered bridge remained in use until 1907. Until a tarpunk was built in the 1870s, heavy rains frequently caused flooding such that travelers had to wait for someone to come on a boat to convey them across.

9. American Legion Hut
Workmen employed by the federal WPA (Works Progress Administration) in the 1930s used whole logs to construct this rustic building in the style of an Adirondacks lodge. It served as a community center where USO dances and other recreational activities were held for soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base during World War II. It is now home of the Neuse Little Theatre, a community theater group.

10. Hastings House
This well preserved Greek Revival house (ca. 1839) served as headquarters for Confederate Generals Joseph E. Johnston, Wade Hampton, and Brevet Brigadier General in March-April 1865 prior to and following the Battle of Bentonville. Major William Hastings acquired the property in 1854, and the Hastings family lived here during the Civil War era. It was moved to its current location in 1965 by the Hastings House Association to prevent its demolition.

11. Primitive Baptist Church
This one-room church (ca. 1875) represents Johnston County’s largest religious denomination of the 19th century. Primitive Baptists still worship in much the same way as their pioneer ancestors—no Sunday school or missionaries, preachers who are “raised up in the church”, and singing without the use of man-made instruments. The Smithfield congregation still sings from the 1841 Benjamin Lloyd hymn book in use since the church’s founding.

12. Riverside Cemetery
Is 1777 John Smith, Jr. provided a half acre plot at the intersection of Front and Church Streets for a hospital for Confederate soldiers in the new town named in his honor. The oldest surviving marker is from 1825, as earlier grave markers haven’t survived the ravages of time. A Confederate monument erected in 1887 stands in front of ‘sixteen graves of Confederate soldiers, who died in Smithfield following the Battle of Bentonville. The cemetery features two statues by the late Frank Creech, a local artist.

13. St. Paul’s Episcopal Church/Baptist Church Site
The original 1777 plan of the town included a churchyard at the corner of Front and Church Streets, but the earliest known church structure, Smithfield Baptist, was built on this lot in 1836. It was a simple one-room meeting house with a gallery for slaves and was used as a temporary hospital by Confederate soldiers in 1865. The present Early English Gothic style sanctuary on this site was built in 1949 by the congregation of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

14. Myatt-Sanders House
This is Smithfield’s only house inspired by Second Empire architecture that became popular during the reign of Napoleon III of France. Nathaniel G. Myatt is believed to have had this dwelling built about 1882 for his wife Mary Woodall Myatt. William Marsh Sanders, a prominent merchant and cotton mill owner, purchased the home in 1885. The house’s most distinctive features are its mansard roof, decorative dormer windows, and its entrance and hallway placed at the right rather than in the center.

15. Congressman Edward W. Poe’s Law Office
Smithfield’s Civil War-era Baptist Church had this two-story brick office building constructed in 1905. It served as the office of U.S. Congressman Edward W. Poe until his death in 1934. Poe represented North Carolina’s Fourth District in the U.S. House of Representatives serving as chairman of the Rules Committee during the Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt administrations. He is buried in Riverside Cemetery.

16. Centenary United Methodist Church
Methodists worshipped a block away from 1839 to 1947, and they completed this impressive domedauditorium. It is a notable example of the Colonial Revival style that was popular in the early 20th century.

17. Courthouse
The original portion facing Market Street was built in 1921-1922 on the same site occupied by courthouses since 1797. It replaced a brick courthouse built in 1843—the headquarters of Union General William T. Sherman April 9-16, 1865. It is now one of the largest sites which former General Robert E. Lee had surrendered at Appomattox Court House, VA. Architect Harry Barton of Greensboro was hired to design this stately, Neo-classical structure, built by contractor, J. W. Stout and Company of Sanford, NC.

18. Bingham House
This Greek Revival house was built on this site in the 1840s by William S. Ballenger, a county sheriff and sawmill operator. Since 1883 it has been owned by James Carroll Bingham and several generations of his descendants. One Bingham heir recalled that when windows were replaced in the early 20th century workers found lost that had been stuffed in the walls prior to the Union Army invasion in 1865.

19. Freedmen’s Schoolhouse
This building is one of Smithfield’s most historically significant landmarks. Originally a two-room schoolhouse, it was built by the federal Freedmen’s Bureau in 1869 for the New York-based American Missionary Association on the adjacent corner of Front and Church Streets. It was moved to its present location about 1887 and continued to serve as a public school for African Americans until 1913.

Sculptor Frank Creech poses with his masterpiece, “The Roads”, at the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield in 1990.

A view of Market Street from the roof of the new courthouse in about 1922. Only three of these buildings are still standing.

With the help of a local contractor and parent volunteers, members of Boy Scout Troop 22 built this Scout Hut in one day on May 15, 1940. They held a meeting here that night.
1. Johnston County Heritage Center

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Dr. Alexander F. Telfair built the original Greek Revival two-room block of this structure prior to 1850 when he formed a medical practice with Dr. John R. Thompson of Raleigh. According to family history, Dr. Thompson was given a walking stick by local citizens in appreciation for his service to the community as a physician during the yellow fever epidemic of 1856. The house has both Greek Revival and Italianate fenestration, reflecting the architectural tastes of the 1840s and 1870s.

5. Barnes-Grady House
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8. Bridge Abutment
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9. American Legion Hut
Workmen employed by the federal WPA (Works Progress Administration) in the 1930s used whole logs to construct this rustic building in the style of an Adirondacks lodge. It served as a community center where USO dances and other recreational activities were held for soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base during World War II. It is now home of the Neuse Little Theatre, a community theater group.

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This well-preserved Greek Revival house (ca. 1839) served as headquarters for Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston, Wade Hampton, and Brevet Brigadier General August 1863 and 1865 prior to and following the Battle of Bentonville. Major William Hastings acquired the property in 1854, and the Hastings family lived here during the Civil War era. It was moved to its current location in 1965 by the Hastings House Association to prevent its demolition.

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13. St. Paul’s Episcopal Church/Baptist Church Site
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14. Myatt-Sanders House
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15. Congressman Edward W. Poe’s Law Office
Smithfield’s oldest law office building was this three-story brick office building constructed in 1905. It served as the office of U.S. Congressman Edward W. Poe until his death in 1934. Poe represented North Carolina’s Fourth District in the U.S. House of Representatives, serving as chairman of the Rules Committee during the Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt administrations. It is burried in Riverside Cemetery.

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