After the Cleghorn home burned, the area was developed, the trees were removed, and the corner remained a sore spot for preservationists for years. In 1998 a project led by the Better Hometown Program, the Chattooga Garden Club, and the Chattooga County Historical Society, restored Willow Spring wayside park. A walking path will lead you from Willow Spring back to the Depot. This path meanders along the banks of the Town Creek and includes a pedestrian bridge. The bridge over the Town Creek connects Dowdy Park to the National Register of Historic Places listed in the Summerville Historic District. The marble curbing bordering the gravel path to the bridge has a historic pedigree. When the city created new park space in the center of Washington Street in 2019, the original Georgia marble curbing, which may have been mined in the county, was removed and relocated for use on this walking trail.

When Summerville was laid out in 1839, the primary cross streets were today’s Washington and Commerce Streets. Georgia’s “good roads” movement grew to fever pitch in 1909. The result was the “Dixie Highway” designation for U.S. Highway 27. Until 1933, the route between Summerville and Rome traversed Washington Street. Between 1909 and 1933, paving and curbing were added to the route.

The restored and relocated Couey House (c.1839) is now located at the corner of Washington and University Streets at the north end of Dowdy Park. The house was built by pioneers Andrew and Fereby Dempsey Couey as a home for their large family. Constructed largely of 4’ by 14” squared logs, the structure was assembled using half-dovetail notches. Almost lost to the expansion of Highway 27 in Dirt Town Valley, the home was saved and restored by GDOT and, with appropriate fanfare, was moved to its current location in 1997.

The tour ends at Veteran’s Memorial Park that honors men and women from throughout the county who have served their country in times of war and peace.

This is only a brief sampling of the history of Summerville and Chattooga County. We invite you to contact the Chattooga County Historical Society Post Office Box 626 Summerville, Georgia 30747 or by email at chattoogahistory@outlook.com for more information.

Historic Area Walking Tour Summerville Parks

The City of Summerville in cooperation with The Chattooga County Historical Society chattoogahistory.org and The Summerville Main Street Program summervillega.org
Historic Area
Summerville Parks

When you visit Summerville, Georgia let your mind carry you back to 1918, the year the Historic Summerville Depot was constructed. The current structure is the third depot located on this site. It was built by the Central of Georgia Railroad in 1918 after the second depot burned to the ground in 1917. The construction date for the first depot and the date it was torn down to make way for the second depot is unknown. The current depot, which served as both a passenger and freight depot, was the center of the life of the county seat for many years. Not only was travel made easier for county residents but visitors, merchandise, and gossip could all be picked up at the depot. The Chattooga County Historical Society purchased the building in 1990 for restoration. After the Historical Society gifted the building to the City of Summerville, the restoration was completed, thanks to support from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Today, the city and the historical society share in the management of the building and it is a popular events venue and the destination for many day-trip excursion trains from Chattanooga.

Across the railroad from the Depot, notice the colorful mural painted on the side of Echols Appliance. The 2014 mural by artist Erik Burke honors Chattooga County and highlights the folk art of Reverend Howard Finster and the Cherokee Syllabary that Sequoyah is believed to have completed while a resident of western Chattooga County. This building was the original warehouse for Taylor Mercantile, a department store that sold groceries, dry goods and even operated an early funeral business.

Two blocks west of the Depot, take notice of signs indicating that Commerce Street is along one of the most-used routes of the Trail of Tears when the Cherokees were forced from their land in 1838, the same year that Chattooga County was founded. This is one of three Trail of Tears routes so marked in the county.

Another historic section of downtown Summerville is located on nearby First Avenue. The current site of Willow Spring Park is the former site of the John S. Cleghorn Home, which burned in the early 1960s, and the John F. Beavers’ Home, located on the west side of Commerce Street, which was demolished in 1984.

Octavia Jones Cleghorn was interested in the beautification of the Cleghorn Home and her town. It was Mrs. Cleghorn who first planted willow trees along Big Spring (later known as Cleghorn Spring) in her expansive yard. Eventually, Mrs. Cleghorn created a beautiful private park she called Willow Spring and the family was happy to share the place with their neighbors.