

Uptown Greenwood

A Century of Growth and Re-Development

Uptown Greenwood is the geographical, cultural and historical center of the railroad and mill town in upstate South Carolina that had its greatest period of growth and prosperity from 1890 to 1920. Now, roughly a century later, Greenwood has restored many of its commercial buildings to that same time period, revitalizing the “Uptown” area into a great public space.

Railroads and Early Development

The first railroad came through Greenwood in 1852 and the small town center that was located on lower East Cambridge moved up the street near the depot to what is now called “Uptown”. That railroad directly led to the town’s incorporation in 1857 and two other rail lines followed in 1882 and 1890. A town square slowly began to form around the three railroad lines and two depots, eventually leading to what was once marketed as the “widest Main Street in the world.” This 320 foot wide transportation hub soon became the center of commerce in Greenwood. Brick commercial buildings in the typical vernacular were eventually built around this expansive street and railroad tracks, then called the Square. The first buildings were built on the east side of the Square, prior to 1890.



Aerial Photograph of Uptown Greenwood, pre-1912

Oregon Hotel

The west side of the Square saw an upsurge of development in 1898 with the building of the Oregon Hotel, described in the newspaper at the time as “the institution that made Greenwood famous.”¹ The four-story brick hotel was built at the corner of Maxwell and Main Street and offered first class dining and rooms right next to the train tracks that were servicing up to 27 trains a day. The success of the Oregon Hotel led to more development along the west side of the Square and down Maxwell Avenue. Maxwell Avenue became a commercial street lined with vernacular brick structures built from 1890-1896. Over the past decade, these store facades have been restored with the help of local tax credits. Private restorations, combined with an outdoor market building built to be reminiscent of the old Seaboard train station downtown and extensive streetscape work has transformed Maxwell Avenue into a thriving public street.



The original Oregon Hotel, built in 1912

Along the west side of the square, a group of businessmen labelled “The Syndicate” built a row of ornately corbeled two-story brick buildings with commercial space on the first floor and an opera house on the second. A Victorian-style granite and brick turret at one end provided a unique architectural flourish. The buildings were aptly called the Syndicate Block. This block, as well as the

¹ Bowen, Anne Heard. “Greenwood County: A History”

buildings on the east side of the square, still stand today and are carefully preserved behind a covered, two-story arcade build in the 1980's.

The original Oregon Hotel was destroyed in a fire in 1912, but was rebuilt in 1914 as a five-story brick neoclassical building that was paired with the Citizen Trust Building, another five-story (though slightly taller) brick neo-classical building. These two buildings were the first of Greenwood's three "skyscrapers" and the bones of the structure still exist, wrapped in a late 1960's style remodel called the Greenwood Building.

Greenwood "Skyscrapers"

The other two "skyscrapers" in Greenwood sit at the south end of Uptown. The Textile building is a six story brick building originally built as a four story bank beginning in 1910. Three more stories were added in 1919. On the opposite side of the square is the eight-story Grier building built in 1919. Both of these buildings are in the process of being renovated to include commercial space on the ground floor with office/residential spaces on the upper floors. Their renovations have been a vital piece of Uptown Greenwood's rebirth over the past decade.



East Main Street circa 1930. The Grier Skyscraper is in the background.

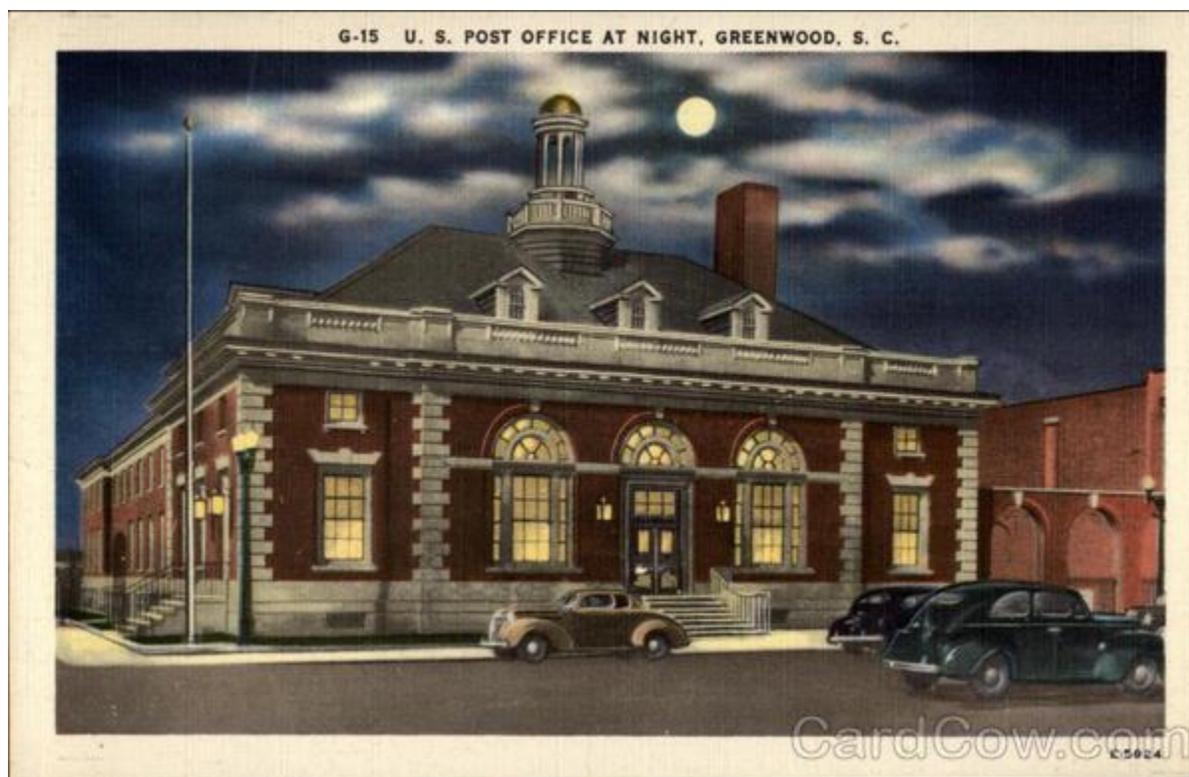
Barksdale Building



Barksdale Buildings (1908)

Another recent renovation in Uptown Greenwood occurred in 2008, at the north end of the Square in what is now called the Barksdale Building. The two-story vernacular brick structure, with Romanesque arches and corbeled brick detailing was built in 1908 to house offices and the Masonic Order. In the 1960's, the building was wrapped in a metallic, wavy covering that hid the buildings fine architectural features for decades. The 2008 restoration returned the Barksdale building to its original appearance, with commercial space on the bottom floor and residential spaces on the second story. Today pedestrian traffic flows from the restored buildings on Maxwell Avenue, across Main Street and to the shops of the Barksdale building on Uptown Greenwood's brick paved Waller Street.

Emerald Triangle



The Federal Building (1911)

Also contributing architecturally and culturally to the Uptown area is the Emerald Triangle—an area of northern Uptown encompassing the Federal Building, the Greenwood Museum and the Greenwood Community Theater. The Federal Building is a neoclassical, Georgian -style structure built in 1911 to serve as the Post Office. The Federal Building now houses The Arts Center of Greenwood (a public space for art galleries, classes and gatherings) and the Greenwood Regional Tourism and Visitors Bureau. Next door to the Federal Building, are the Greenwood Community Theater and the Greenwood Museum, both art deco style buildings built in the late 1930's.



Greenwood Community Theater, once called the State Theater (1934)

Uptown Greenwood is a dichotomy of architectural styles and planning practices that span over a century. The original brick commercial buildings that surrounded a vast square of railways and depots provide a unique challenge in tying Uptown together. Now that the railways have been pulled up, grassy medians flush with trees are tied together by brick lined crosswalks. Old abandoned railway beds have become linkages to the Uptown area through greenways and future areas for network expansion.

Uptown Greenwood Timeline

1852- First Railroad in Greenwood

1857- Greenwood is incorporated as a town

1882- Second railway line comes through Greenwood

1889- East side of Uptown Greenwood developed, as two –story brick commercial building

1890- Third railway line is built

1890-1896- Commercial Strip of buildings built on lower Maxwell. Currently being restored with help from local tax credits. A new outdoor Market building was built in

1898- Brick row of commercial buildings built along west side of Main Street. Still intact, connected by covered walkway

1898- First Oregon Hotel built at corner of Maxwell and Main

1908- Barksdale Building built. Restored in 2008 as mixed use.

1911- Neoclassical style Post Office built. Now called the Federal Building, it houses the Arts Center of Greenwood.

1912- Fire destroys the original Oregon Hotel

1914- Second Oregon Hotel built in conjunction with the slightly taller Citizen Trust Building, Greenwood’s first “skyscraper”

1919- Three floors were added to the four story American Bank Building. Now called the Textile Building and has been restored as a mixed-use building with the help of local tax credits.

1919-Grier Building is constructed as the Commercial Bank Building. Currently being restored as a mixed use building.

1930's-The State Theater, now known as The Greenwood Community Theater, and the building that houses the Greenwood Museum was built

1980's-Rairoad tracks removed from Uptown Greenwood. Two-story covered walkways, or arcades, were built along commercial buildings on Main Street.

2000-present- Revitalization of Uptown Greenwood