

## Historic Walking Tour of Plymouth

Welcome to Plymouth! For seventy years prior to Plymouth's founding in 1787, generations of the Rhodes family were planters in the area. Arthur Rhodes founded what was to become Plymouth from land he acquired through inheritance, gift deeds, and purchases. This collection of property became his plantation and was called Brick House. From that property, he sectioned off one hundred acres, subdividing them into 172 lots, which he would sell. These lots were the beginnings of Plymouth.

Water played a major role in the development of Plymouth. Flatboats floated down the creeks and rivers loaded with goods and produce to be reloaded onto ocean sailing vessels. In 1790, the United States Congress established Plymouth as a port of delivery, complete with a customs house. Schooners bound for the West Indies sailed from the port heavily laden with hogsheads of tobacco, barrels of tar, pitch, and turpentine, masts and spars, corn and rice.

Being a key port, Plymouth was hotly contested during the Civil War. The Battle of Plymouth in April of 1864 and the sinking of the CSS Albemarle were the most significant and impactful events in our history. Only 5 structures survived the Civil War: Grace Episcopal Church, the Windley-Ausbon House, the Charles Latham House, the Picot-Armistead-Pettiford House, and the Clark-Chesson House. Look for these along with post-Civil War structures as you partake of Plymouth's history through its built environment.

Use the map on the reverse to locate these structures!

### 1 Roanoke River Lighthouse (Replica)

215 W. Water Street



A lightship was located at the mouth of the Roanoke River in 1835 and survived until the Civil War, when it was captured by Confederate forces and was eventually taken up the Roanoke River and scuttled. After the Civil War, a spark-plug type lighthouse was erected on pylons at the mouth of the Roanoke River and the Albemarle Sound. This is a detailed replica of this first incarnation, built in 1866. This original version served until 1885 when it burned down. A second version was built but was toppled by ice sheets a year later. A third version was built in 1887 that served until 1941. That lighthouse is in Edenton.

### 2 Picot-Armistead-Pettiford House

302 W. Main Street



Built c. 1830, this is one of the five structures that withstood the ravages of the Civil War. With its commanding view of the Roanoke, the oldest portion is the three bays of the house. Erected by medical doctor Julian Picot, it has been home to a series of distinguished owners. Robert Armistead, another medical doctor, purchased the house in 1844 and added the two-story block to the west gable end. In 1914, Rueben Pettiford, a brick mason and prominent black citizen, purchased it and it remained in the family until 2014, when it was donated to the Plymouth Museum Council.

### 3 Clark-Chesson House

219 Jefferson Street



Built c. 1810. Plymouth's oldest surviving house was built by David Clark. In 1833, Elijah Cornell purchased the property, who operated Cornell Ship Yard in Plymouth along with his two brothers. His cousin, Ezra, founded Cornell University. This two-story, weatherboarded frame Federal period house is another of the five that survived the Civil War.

### 4 David O. Brinkley House

114 W. Main Street



Built c. 1914. One of Plymouth's leading businessmen of the 1880's built this Queen Anne style house in a most unusual material for its day—cement block. Its castle-like appearance is also another facet that makes this house unique, as no other house in Plymouth resembles it.

### 5 Hampton Academy

110 W. Water Street



Built c. 1902. Erected through the beneficence of Plymouth natives Dr. John T. Hampton and his brother William H. Hampton, it was Plymouth's first brick school house. It operated from 1902 to 1922 and housed all school grades. It reopened in 1928 as a primary school until 1958 when a new high school was erected and it was purchased by the Plymouth Women's Club in 1959.

### 6 Hornthal House

109 W. Main Street



Built c. 1870, 1930s. This Picturesque villa was built by Louis Henry Hornthal, a prominent businessman in Plymouth and active in the town's social life, and remained in the family until 1930 when it was sold to "Cissy" Ayers, who added the two-story portico and leaded glass entrance. The wood trim around the front gable uses elements of gothic tracery as embellishment.

#### Resources:

[GoWildNC.com](http://GoWildNC.com) [VisitPlymouthNC.com](http://VisitPlymouthNC.com)  
[PortOPlymouthMuseum.org](http://PortOPlymouthMuseum.org) [RoanokeRiverLighthouse.com](http://RoanokeRiverLighthouse.com)

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**Windley-Ausbon House**  
302 Washington Street



Built c. 1840. Another of the 5 structures that survived the Civil War, this one firmly holds public attention due to its still-visible battle scars. In 1862, a Confederate sniper positioned himself in the second story window facing north and alone began firing upon the advancing Union troops who were occupying the town. This skirmish hammered the house with Union minie balls, cannister shot from cannon, and a large hole in the north chimney. Probably built for Edmond Windley, it has been a residence to the Ausbon family until 2022.

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**Perry-Spruill House**  
326 Washington Street



Built c. 1883. This Gothic Revival cottage was built for Theo A. Perry. In 1895, Jeremiah C. Spruill, a leading Plymouth merchant, purchased the house which remained the Spruill family residence until 1985. The salient features of this house are the stunning ornamental peaked gables with lancet arch window surrounds and fleur-de-lis bargeboard embellishment.

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**Methodist Church**



Built c. 1832, 1860, 1931. The congregation of the Methodist Church is the oldest religious body in Plymouth, who organized in 1827 and acquired lots for this building site between 1832 and 1853.

The first structure was wood frame. Damaged during the Civil War, it was, according to an 1890 article in the local paper, torn down and its timbers used for firewood or to make coffins for Civil War soldiers. The church was rebuilt in wood frame with brick veneer added in 1931.

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**New Chapel Baptist 301 Madison Street**



Built c. 1924. This Gothic Revival church is considered one of the boldest of the twentieth century twin tower styles. Built to serve the Black community, its cornerstone states the congregation formed in 1867 (one year prior to the white Baptist congregation), making it the oldest Black congregation in Plymouth.

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**Washington County Courthouse**  
120 Adams Street



Built c. 1918-1919. This is the fourth courthouse erected on this site. In 1823, the State Legislature moved the county seat from Lee's Mill (present day Roper) to Plymouth. The first version was erected in 1824 and served the county until 1862 when it was destroyed by fire. A second version was erected immediately thereafter, but exact dates are unclear. That version was destroyed by fire again in 1873. In 1881, a third version was erected which was a two-story frame structure which served until either 1917 or 1918 when it was demolished to make way for this fourth and final Greek Revival version. Why so many fires? Many disgruntled citizens showed their disapproval of tax increases and court judgements by burning down the courthouse.

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**Latham-Ward-Hampton House**  
302 E. Main Street



Built c. 1870. One of the first dwellings built in Plymouth after the Civil War, this cross plan had a series of distinguished owners beginning with the builder, Louis Charles Latham, a prominent NC legislator. The second owner was Dr. William H. Ward, a major benefactor of Grace Episcopal Church. In 1918, it was acquired by William Roy Hampton, a prominent businessman in town.

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**Charles Latham House**  
311 E. Main



Built c. 1850. Another to survive the Civil War, this Greek Revival style house was built by Plymouth's most prominent citizen, Charles Latham, who occupied it until 1883. Latham served in the NC House of Commons, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. During the Battle of Plymouth, it served as a hospital.

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**Grace Episcopal**  
107 Madison Street



Built c. 1861, 1893. Designed by the nationally-known architect Robert Upjohn, this Gothic Revival church was heavily damaged during the Battle of Plymouth. It was rebuilt in 1893, retaining the apse and tower.

