

Beyond the Beaten Boulevard

Atlanta's Historic Neighborhoods Worth the Detour

Atlanta's Hidden History – Inman Park & Florida Heights | Beyond the Beaten Boulevard

Issue No. 2 ♦ Inman Park ♦ Florida Heights

Some cities keep their history in museums. Atlanta keeps it in the streets — in the curve of a road laid down for a streetcar that no longer runs, in the park that sits where a freeway was supposed to be, in the mansion built by the man who sold the world a soft drink, still standing at the corner where he left it more than a century ago. The city does not always announce these things. It expects you to ask.

This issue takes us east and southwest — from the Victorian splendor of Atlanta's oldest planned neighborhood to a quiet, working-class community on the Westside that the rest of the city is only beginning to see clearly. One neighborhood was born from a civil engineer's vision of paradise. The other was born from the older, quieter work of people who simply decided to stay. Both are Atlanta. Both deserve your attention.

CHAPTER ONE

Inman Park

The Battlefield That Became a Garden

“High up above the city, where the purest breezes and the brightest sunshine drove away the germs of disease, and where nature had lavished her best gifts...”

— Early promotional description of Inman Park, 1889

Most people who live in Inman Park know, in a general way, that it is old — that the houses are Victorian, that the streets curve in ways Atlanta streets rarely do, that there is something about a

trolley. What most people do not know is that the ground beneath those Victorian mansions and curving sidewalks was, twenty-five years before the first lot was ever sold, a battlefield.

What the Ground Carried Before the First Foundation Was Poured

The history of Inman Park does not begin in 1889, when Joel Hurt sold the first lots in his magnificent new garden suburb. It begins on July 22, 1864, when two armies fought the Battle of Atlanta across the same rolling terrain — the same land that Hurt would purchase twenty years later and transform into the city's first planned residential community. The men who fell here were buried, the trenches were smoothed, and the land was sold. But the ground remembered.

Joel Hurt was a trained civil engineer and one of Atlanta's most consequential businessmen. In 1886, he established the East Atlanta Land Company and acquired 130 acres east of the city. He envisioned something Atlanta had never seen: a garden suburb, designed on Olmstedian principles, connected to downtown by the city's first electric streetcar. He hired British landscape architect James Forsyth Johnson — a disciple of philosopher John Ruskin, who believed that beauty was not ornament but moral discipline — to design the neighborhood's signature curvilinear streets, its open green spaces, and its ten-acre centerpiece, Springvale Park.

The trolley launched in August 1889. For a five-cent fare, it carried residents from Inman Park to downtown in fifteen minutes — a journey that one reporter described as arriving like "a benediction to drivers who have clattered over stones and dodged vehicles in town in a vain effort to get sweetness and light in their daily ride." The neighborhood filled quickly with Atlanta's most prominent families. Asa Candler, the Coca-Cola founder, built Callan Castle here. Ernest Woodruff, who purchased the Coca-Cola Company from the Candlers in 1919, also made his home on these streets.

SIX THINGS MOST ATLANTANS DON'T KNOW ABOUT INMAN PARK

1. It was named for someone who did not live there.

Joel Hurt, who conceived, financed, and built the neighborhood, did not name it for himself. He named it for his friend and business partner, Samuel M. Inman, a cotton merchant. Hurt got a park named for him downtown. Inman Park went to Inman.

2. The curving streets were a philosophy, not a preference.

Landscape architect James Forsyth Johnson was a disciple of John Ruskin, who believed that straight lines were the geometry of industry and that curved, naturalistic streets were the geometry of human dignity. Every bend in every block of Inman Park is, in some sense, an argument about how people deserve to live.

3. Asa Candler's mansion is still there — and available for rent.

Callan Castle, built between 1902 and 1904 at the corner of Elizabeth Street and Euclid Avenue, is still standing. The 5,622-square-foot Beaux-Arts home — named for the Candler family's ancestral estate in Ireland — has a 2023 estimated market value of three million dollars and is available for film and television production rentals starting at \$250,000 per month.

4. Krog Street Market was a stove factory before it was a food hall — and a Tyler Perry studio in between.

The building at 99 Krog Street was constructed in 1889 as the Atlanta Stove Works, manufacturing cast-iron stoves for decades. Before its current incarnation as one of Atlanta's most celebrated food halls, a portion of the site housed production facilities for Tyler Perry's films and television work.

5. The 1970s restoration pioneers changed how Atlanta governs itself.

When a small group of young people began buying derelict Inman Park homes in the early 1970s to stop the I-485 freeway from erasing the neighborhood, their political organizing was so effective that Mayor Maynard Jackson restructured Atlanta's city charter to create the Neighborhood Planning Unit system — a model of citizen involvement in city planning that has influenced cities across the country.

6. The land cleared for the freeway became Freedom Park.

More than 200 acres were condemned and cleared for the proposed I-485 corridor — entire blocks demolished, the neighborhood of Copenhill erased from the map. When the road was stopped, that cleared land became Freedom Park, a linear green space dotted with public art running from Inman Park toward the Carter Center. The park you walk through was once someone's home.

“
Communities didn't have a voice, and they didn't know about the freeways.
”

— Joseph Drolet, Inman Park restoration pioneer and founder of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association

INMAN PARK

The Places Worth Finding

Bread & Butterfly

Named one of The New York Times' 50 best restaurants in America in 2024. By day, a Parisian-inflected café under Chef Demetrius Brown. By night, French technique applied to the cuisines of the African diaspora — dishes that carry the full historical weight of French colonization of Africa and the Caribbean and make that weight, somehow, beautiful. A Black-owned restaurant doing some of the most original cooking in America.

290 Elizabeth St NE, Atlanta, GA 30307 · (404) 301-0101 [CHECK OUT BREAD & BUTTERFLY >](#)

BoccaLupo

Chef Bruce Logue's pasta kingdom. The Italian-American menu changes with what is best and freshest, but the black spaghetti with hot Calabrese sausage, shrimp, and scallions has become something approaching legend. The 20-yolk tagliatelle with wild mushrooms and Tuscan kale kimchi is the kind of dish that makes you question every pasta you have eaten before it.

753 Edgewood Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30307 · (404) 577-2332 [CHECK OUT BOCCALUPO >](#)

Beetlecat

Sits on the Eastside BeltLine Trail and has made oysters its devotion. The daily menu is built around what arrived fresh that morning; the raw bar is one of the city's best; weekday oyster happy hour runs four to six. Below the main dining room, the Den — a low-lit, vinyl-spinning cocktail lounge with a 1970s soul — is one of the more distinctive rooms in Atlanta dining.

299 North Highland Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30307 [CHECK OUT BEETLECAT >](#)

Krog Street Market

A food hall housed in a 137-year-old stove factory, situated at the center of the Eastside BeltLine Trail. Artisan vendors, serious food, and a communal energy that feels earned rather than manufactured. Step outside and you are immediately on the BeltLine — one of Atlanta's most remarkable civic achievements, available for walking, cycling, and the quiet pleasure of moving through the city at a human pace.

99 Krog St NE, Atlanta, GA 30307 [CHECK OUT KROG STREET MARKET >](#)

The Trolley Barn

The physical memory of Atlanta's first electric streetcar, preserved and repurposed as a venue for private events and community gatherings. To stand inside it is to stand inside the reason Inman Park exists — the vehicle that made it possible to live in a garden and work in a city, that turned 130 acres of former battlefield into the most coveted residential address in Gilded Age Atlanta.

963 Edgewood Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30307 [INQUIRE ABOUT THE TROLLEY BARN >](#)

Inman Park Festival and Tour of Homes

Held every April on the last full weekend of the month — the largest all-volunteer festival in the state of Georgia. It began in the early 1970s as a Tour of Homes organized by the restoration pioneers to show what they were rescuing. If you want to see the interiors of the houses whose exteriors you have admired from the sidewalk, this is your once-a-year invitation.

inmanparkfestival.org [LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FESTIVAL >](#)

The battlefield became a garden. The freeway became a park. The detour, it turns out, was always the destination.



CHAPTER TWO

Florida Heights

What the Westside Held

Most people who know southwest Atlanta know it in shorthand — a commute, a route, a direction. They do not know the specific weight of what the land here has carried: the soldiers who marched along what is now Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard toward the bloodiest Confederate defeat of

the Atlanta Campaign, the families who built churches before they built anything else, the legacy residents who have held this community together through every economic cycle that has tried to shake them loose.

The Ground Before the Streets Were Named

The land around Florida Heights is Civil War ground in a way that most Atlantans do not know. On July 28, 1864 — six days after the Battle of Atlanta raged through what would become Inman Park — Confederate troops under Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee and Lieutenant General Alexander P. Stewart marched west along what is now Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard, then known as Lick Skillet Road, toward Ezra Church, a Methodist chapel on the ridge now occupied by neighboring Mozley Park.

What followed was the Battle of Ezra Church: a lopsided Union victory in which the Confederates launched charge after charge against an entrenched Union Army that had seen them coming and dug in. When it was over, a Federal picket called across the lines: "Well, Johnny, how many of you are left?" The Confederate reply carried across the silence: "Oh, about enough for another killing." Hood lost nearly five thousand men that afternoon. The ground where they fell is the ground that would become, decades later, the quiet residential streets of southwest Atlanta.

Florida Heights grew into a working-class community through the mid-twentieth century — a neighborhood of churches, front porches, and neighbors who knew each other by name. Its story is not the story of a single founding visionary or a celebrated freeway fight. It is the more durable story of people who stayed.

SIX THINGS MOST ATLANTANS DON'T KNOW ABOUT FLORIDA HEIGHTS

1. The Battle of Ezra Church was fought on its doorstep.

The July 28, 1864 engagement — Hood's most costly defeat — took place on ground immediately adjacent to Florida Heights. Confederate troops marched along what is now Abernathy Boulevard through this very corridor. The battlefield has no monument here. The history walks the streets without a sign.

2. The neighborhood's street grid was laid before the neighborhood had a name.

As Atlanta expanded its grid outward in the early twentieth century, the streets that would become Florida Heights were platted as residential land before any community existed to name them. The neighborhood grew up around the grid rather than the other way around — a reversal of the usual order that shaped its character from the start.

3. Churches were the first civic infrastructure.

Long before neighborhood associations arrived, the churches of Florida Heights were the institutions that kept the blocks together — organizing mutual aid, anchoring gatherings, and providing the social architecture that made the neighborhood a community rather than simply a collection of houses. Their influence predates every other institution the neighborhood has known.

4. It borders one of the most consequential streets in Atlanta's racial history.

Florida Heights sits adjacent to Mozley Park, an early epicenter of white flight in Atlanta in the late 1940s. As Black families expanded westward from overcrowded neighborhoods, the racial transition of the surrounding area became a flashpoint that revealed the stark geography of residential segregation — and the organized determination of Black Atlantans to secure housing on their own terms.

5. The Lionel Hampton Trail connects the neighborhood to Atlanta's BeltLine system.

The trail that winds through the area links Florida Heights to the larger network of greenway trails Atlanta has been building across its southwest quadrant — giving the neighborhood an increasingly significant connection to the city's most ambitious infrastructure project. The southwest BeltLine is the least-traveled and arguably the most necessary segment of the entire system.

6. Rosalie H. Wright Elementary School is being rebuilt — by the community, for the community.

The school that anchored Florida Heights for generations is now being redeveloped through a partnership that has put legacy residents at the center of every decision, with a process that explicitly prioritizes affordable housing, equity, and long-term neighborhood stability. In a city that has watched neighborhood after neighborhood lose its identity to rapid growth, Florida Heights is attempting something harder: growing in a way that keeps faith with the people who made it.

“

Families put down roots. Churches, small businesses, and neighborhood

institutions anchor the community. Florida Heights becomes home to

”

generations of Atlantans who build their lives here.

— Florida Heights ATL Neighborhood Group

FLORIDA HEIGHTS

The Places Worth the Detour

Westside BeltLine Trail

Atlanta's most important underutilized asset: 3.2 miles of former rail corridor running from West Marietta Street south to I-20, stitching together the southwest Atlanta neighborhoods that have waited longest for the BeltLine's promises. Walking it on a clear morning — through the tunnels, past the murals, along the creek corridors — is one of the most honest experiences of Atlanta that the city currently offers.

beltline.org/westside-trail **CHECK OUT THE WESTSIDE TRAIL** ›

John A. White Park Golf Course

Opened in 1931, one of Atlanta's oldest municipal golf courses and one of the few remaining public courses inside the city. The nine-hole course winds through the wooded terrain of southwest Atlanta. Its history includes serving as one of the few recreational golf facilities accessible to Black Atlantans during the era of segregation. It is not a famous course. It is a historically significant one — and it is still very much in play.

1139 Cascade Circle SW, Atlanta, GA 30311 [CHECK OUT JOHN A. WHITE PARK GOLF ›](#)

Noni's Bar & Deli

A short trip east on the BeltLine puts you in reach of Noni's, one of Atlanta's most genuinely beloved neighborhood bars and delis. Inexpensive Italian-American food, a kitchen that takes its sandwiches seriously, and the kind of wine poured without ceremony that makes a Tuesday feel like an occasion.

357 Edgewood Ave SE, Atlanta, GA 30312 · (404) 343-1808 [CHECK OUT NONI'S ›](#)

Pittsburgh Yards

One of the most interesting civic-commercial experiments currently underway in southwest Atlanta — a 31-acre campus developed by Purpose Built Communities, offering market space, maker workshops, food vendors, and community programming. It is not a destination in the conventional sense. It is something more useful: a working model of what intentional community development looks like when it takes the existing community seriously.

351 University Ave SW, Atlanta, GA 30310 [CHECK OUT PITTSBURGH YARDS ›](#)

Cascade Road Corridor

No single restaurant, but a corridor worth driving: Cascade Road through southwest Atlanta is lined with Black-owned businesses, restaurants, and institutions that have served this community for generations. The corridor is Atlanta's most sustained example of independent Black commerce, and it deserves the same curatorial attention that Auburn Avenue receives. It is not a tourist destination. It is the real thing.

Cascade Rd SW, Atlanta, GA 30311 [EXPLORE THE CASCADE CORRIDOR ›](#)

Moreland Taproom

For a beer that rewards the walk, Moreland Taproom offers a rotating selection of local and regional craft pours in a space that manages to feel both intentional and informal. The kind of place where the BeltLine crowd mixes with the neighborhood crowd without anyone making a point of it.

1196 Moreland Ave SE, Atlanta, GA 30316 [CHECK OUT MORELAND TAPROOM ›](#)

The ground held soldiers in 1864 and held families in every decade since. The detour, it turns out, was always the destination.

**WHAT ATLANTA INTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD IS
WEIGHING ON YOUR MIND?**

Beyond the Beaten Boulevard publishes twice a month. Every neighborhood in this city has a story. I have spent twenty-five years learning them — and I am nowhere near finished. If there is a neighborhood you have always wondered about, I want to hear about it.

CONNECT WITH YOUR GUIDE

Have a neighborhood you would love for me to feature, or questions regarding the neighborhoods? I am always available.

Shawn Morgan

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