

Downtown Cary Driving Tour

CARY, NORTH CAROLINA



This is one of a series of tours developed for Cary's sesquicentennial celebration in 2021. These tours celebrate Cary's past, present and future by guiding participants to many significant and interesting places throughout town. Share your tour experiences and photos on social media using [#Cary150Tours](#).

The tours are not comprehensive; there is much more to learn about Cary than can be included in a tour designed to be completed within an hour. Visit www.cary150.org to learn more about Cary's 150th anniversary celebration, find other tours, share your stories and see what else is happening in 2021 and beyond!

Refer to the map for the approximate tour locations and visit them in any order you prefer. Several parking areas are highlighted if you wish to walk parts of this driving tour. Please drive safely, be mindful of when schools or churches might be in session and be respectful of cemeteries and other private property. Many tour stops are on private property, so please remain in your vehicle when visiting them. Circumstances might prevent stopping or parking at some tour stops. Please adhere to appropriate COVID-19 guidelines if you exit your car.

Cary's History

The earliest known inhabitants of present-day Wake County were Tuscarora Native Americans. Around 1790, John Bradford operated an "Ordinary", or inn, and the community was known as Bradford's Ordinary. About 1871, Allison Francis "Frank" Page and his wife Catherine Raboteau Page built a hotel to serve railroad passengers (now the Page-Walker Arts and History Center). In 1871, the Town was incorporated and named for Samuel Fenton Cary of Ohio, whom Frank Page admired. Cary began as a small farming community and remained that way until about 50 years ago when RTP was created. Today, Cary is a thriving community with more than 170,000 residents.

1. Page-Walker Arts & History Center

119 Ambassador Loop (shown ca. 1916)

Cary's founder, Frank Page, and his wife Catherine built this railroad hotel in ca. 1871 when the population of Cary was only 316. At that time, its French Second Empire architectural style was considered grand. It was purchased in 1884 by Jacob and Helen Walker and maintained as a hotel for railroad passengers and a boarding house for Cary High School students and faculty. It later passed through several owners and eventually fell into disrepair. The Town of Cary purchased it in 1985 and restored it with the help of the Friends of the Page-Walker Hotel. Today it houses the Cary Heritage Museum and is host to many events that draw thousands of people annually. On the hotel grounds you can find the Page smokehouse, the Anne B. Kratzer educational gardens and a pollinator garden. The Page-Walker is a local historic landmark. You can take a virtual tour at friendsofpagewalker.org.



2. Mural on La Farm Building 220 West Chatham Street

Chances are, if you've driven by the intersection of West Chatham Street and Harrison Avenue, you've spotted the mural on the side of the La Farm Bakery building. The entrance to the parking lot near the mural is on Harrison Avenue. In 2003, artist Val Fox painted this mural, entitled "Cary Now and Then," depicting many people who have had significant influence on the history of Cary. Can you spot Samuel Fenton Cary, our town's namesake, on the right near the word "Cary"? If this mural was to be repainted 50 years from now, can you imagine who might appear on the new version? What might Cary's downtown look like 50 years from now? Let us know what you think on social media using [#Cary150Tours](#).



3. Hillcrest Cemetery 608-610 Page Street

Hillcrest Cemetery is the final resting place of men and women who made contributions to Cary's social, economic, political and religious growth and development during the 19th and 20th centuries, including 17 former mayors and education and business leaders – you're likely to recognize the names on many grave markers, such as Yates, Yarborough, Maynard, Hunter, Baucom, Farrell, Guess, Heater, Walker, Harrison, Upchurch and Jones. Hillcrest Cemetery is owned by the Town of Cary and is a local historic landmark.



The cemetery is the town's only municipal cemetery and has graves that date from 1840 to the present time. Noteworthy among these are members of the early Page and Jones families; Marcus Baxter Dry, principal of Cary High School for thirty-four years; Alfred "Buck" Jones, who was appointed as U.S. Consul General to Shanghai by President Grover Cleveland; Helen Yates Walker, who managed the Walker Hotel for more than 30 years before turning it into a boarding house; Rachel Eaton Dunham, who was instrumental in starting the Gourd Village Garden Club and Cary Historical Society; and Russell O. Heater, former chairman of the Wake County Board of Commissioners and organizer of Veterans Hill, a post-World War II housing development in Cary that provided housing for veterans returning from the war.

Pick up a self-guided walking tour brochure right inside the cemetery gates to discover more about this historic place.

4. Cary First Christian Church Cemetery 300 West Cornwall Road

This active cemetery is where some of Cary's most prominent African Americans from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are buried, including the Arrington, Bates, Cotton, Hicks and Stroud families, among others. It was a burial ground as early as 1867, perhaps earlier. Sallie Jones, a member of First Christian Church, led efforts to restore this cemetery in the 1980s. It was designated as a Cary Historic Landmark in 2013. Cary First Christian Church and the Friends of the Page-Walker Hotel are developing a walking tour for this stately cemetery; brochures are planned to be available at the cemetery by summer 2021. Be sure to return to learn more about this historic cemetery.



This stop is also included in the African American History Driving Tour, see Cary150.org for more information.

5. Cary Arts Center 101 Dry Avenue

The Cary Arts Center is the downtown hub of arts activity. Its historic legacy of education began in the 1870s when Cary's founder, Allison Francis "Frank" Page, opened Cary Academy. In 1896 it was officially chartered with the state of North Carolina as Cary High School and in 1907 became North Carolina's first public high school. Later the school became Cary Elementary School until the new elementary school was built next door. In 2006, the Town of Cary purchased and renovated the former school.



It was opened in 2010 as The Cary Arts Center. Today you can watch a live play, dance, or musical performance; learn woodworking and how to throw pottery; and make glass, metal or textile art. Don't miss the historic photographs, artwork and gallery exhibits. The building is a local historic landmark. The original Cary High School, ca. 1900, is pictured here.



6. Sams-Jones House 324 South Academy Street

This Queen Anne cottage was likely built around 1890 by Andrew Fuller Sams, a teacher and principal at Cary High School in the early 20th century. Members of the Jones family owned the house for 61 years, and several principals and students of Cary High School also lived here. The Sams-Jones house is a Cary historic landmark. Currently, this is the location of the Asian Fusion restaurant called MC Restaurant.

7. Dr. John Pullen Hunter House 311 South Academy Street

This Craftsman style house was the home and office of Dr. John Pullen Hunter (pictured), one of Cary's prominent doctors and a civic booster. The small white building at the rear of the property is the only intact, original chicken coop in downtown Cary. The Hunter house is a local historic landmark. Today, this home is used as a professional office.



8. Esther Ivey House 302 South Academy Street

Built around 1890, this house was the home of A.R. Raven, the first pastor of First Methodist Church and later was the home of Esther Ivey (pictured), a long-time Cary resident. In 2009, the house was rehabilitated and converted to a bridal shop; this adaptive reuse was recognized with an Anthemion Award from Capital Area Preservation.



9. Dr. Yarborough house 219 South Academy Street

Dr. Frank R. Yarborough (pictured) built this home around 1935 and today it remains a private residence of the Yarborough family. In addition to his profession as a physician, Yarborough was also elected mayor of Cary in 1927. His medical office was a wing attached to the one-and-a-half story frame cottage. During segregation years, Black and white patients used separate entrances that can still be seen on the East Park Street side of the house. Dr. Yarborough may have been required to have a separate "colored" entrance, but he had only one waiting room for all his clients to wait in together. The house boasts Colonial Revival details typical of the period: three gabled dormer windows, eight-over-eight and six-over-six sashes, simple fluted door surrounds, and slender columns supporting the porches.

10. Guess-Ogle House 215 South Academy Street

The central portion of Guess-Ogle House dates to the 1830s and was the home of railroad "roadmaster" Captain Harrison P. Guess and his wife, Aurelia. John White, a local Baptist minister, added the Queen Anne-style extensions to the home's 3-story tower in the late 19th century. Carroll and Sheila Ogle bought the property in 1997 and restored it. The Guess-Ogle House is a Cary Historic Landmark.



11. First United Methodist Church 117 South Academy Street

In 1871, twelve families organized the First Methodist Church. The church's pastor was A. R. Raven. This gable-front Gothic Revival-style building, thought to have been built shortly after the founding of the church, was considerably altered during the 1920s when brick was applied, stained glass installed, buttresses added, and a steeple removed (replaced by a crenelated battlement-style tower). This created a "castle-ized" version of the earlier wooden Gothic form. Portions of the original structure's style may be seen in the scalloped wood rafter on the north and south sides,



supporting brackets, and drop “cloverleaf” quatrefoil pendants. Lancet windows, an intersecting tracery window above the front door, textured brick, and decorative horizontal brick courses running around the tower and main walls are other notable features. Date of photo unknown. First United Methodist Church is also celebrating its 150th Birthday in 2021. Happy 150th Birthday!

12. Ashworth Drug Store 105 West Chatham Street

Opened in 1931 as a Masonic Lodge, this building later became Adams Drug Store. It was purchased by Ralph and Daphne Ashworth in 1957 and for more than 60 years, this iconic full-service pharmacy has been a gathering spot with its well-loved soda fountain that sells old fashioned milk shakes, fresh squeezed lemonade, hot dogs and more. Ralph and Daphne Ashworth were recipients of Cary’s Hometown Spirit Award and have contributed to the vitality of Cary’s downtown in many ways. The original Adams Drug Store is shown here, ca. 1930s.



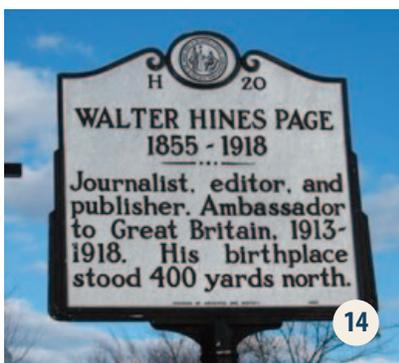
13. The Cary Theatre 122 East Chatham Street



Built in 1946, this was Cary’s first indoor movie theatre and it hosted live performances as well as films. In the segregation era, Black patrons used a separate side entrance that led to the balcony, as shown in the pre-restoration photo on the right, ca. 2011. The theater later became a clothing store, an auto parts store and a recording studio. The Town purchased, restored and reopened the theater in 2014. Today, the iconic marquee in front of the The Cary Theatre lights up downtown Cary and the venue provides a unique setting for cinema and live performances, including the Beyond Cary film festival and Zombiepaloosa. The Cary Theatre is also home to The Brew coffee bar and Cofounders, a startup incubator that helps entrepreneurs to shape Cary’s future. The marquee from 1953 is shown on the left.



14. Walter Hines Page historic marker 154/156 East Chatham Street



While you are sitting at one of the outdoor café tables sipping your coffee from The Brew, you can look down the street past FRESH Local Ice Cream and see the historical marker for one of Cary’s most famous citizens, Walter Hines Page. This was the first historical marker in Cary. Walter Hines Page was the son of Cary’s founder and became an ambassador to Great Britain from 1913-1918. He is honored with a tablet inside Westminster Abbey for advocating that the United States side with Britain and its allies during World War I.

This tour includes several highlights of Cary’s rich history, but it represents only a portion of a much larger story. Much of the material for this tour was provided by the Friends of the Page-Walker Hotel, who offer guided trolley tours, including a Cary History tour, that provide a more detailed look into Cary’s history. To learn more, visit friendsofpagewalker.org.



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14. **Walter Hines Page historic marker**
154/156 East Chatham Street

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