About Salisbury, North Carolina

Salisbury, the county seat of Rowan County, is the oldest city in the western half of North Carolina. In the early days , the area was the home of the Saura, Sapona and Catawba Indians. Beginning in the 1740s, a mass migration of Scotch-Irish and German settlers came into this Piedmont area via two trails from the north - the old Trading Path from Virginia and the Great Wagon Road from Pennsylvania. On April 12, 1753, acting Governor Matthew Rowan, for whom the county was named, signed a bill from the Colonial Assembly, creating Rowan County and the Parish of St. Luke's. The new county seat was called Rowan Courthouse for two years until it was re-named Salisbury in the deed for the town that was dated February 11, 1755. It is generally agreed that the town is named after Salisbury, England.

Countless individuals and events in history are associated with Salisbury. In 1755, Governor Arthur Dobbs visited here and wrote that the town consisted of a courthouse, jail, pillory, stocks, and seven or eight log houses. Other famous residents and visitors during the 1700's were Daniel Boone the great pioneer; Andrew Jackson, our 7th President, who studied law in Salisbury; and both General Nathaniel Greene and Lord Cornwallis made temporary headquarters in Salisbury. The home of General John Steele, the nation's first comptroller, is located on Richard Street. During his tour of the southern states in 1791, George Washington visited Salisbury where he spent the night, and the townspeople held a ball in his honor.

John W. Ellis, Governor of North Carolina at the outbreak of the Civil War, was from Salisbury. During the war Salisbury was a strategic city due to its location on the railroad and the large military prison for Union soldiers. After the Reconstruction period, Salisbury began to reflect an improved economy based upon the railroad, tobacco, textiles, whiskey and trade.

Salisbury is the birthplace of several internationally-known companies and today enjoys a diversified economy. It is also home of four colleges: Catawba College, Hood Theological Seminary, Livingstone College, and Rowan-Cabarrus Community College. Many point to Salisbury as a leader in historic preservation and applaud its blossoming into a cultural arts center. The downtown is vibrant, and there are beautifully restored buildings and neighborhoods throughout the city. Salisbury has both a rich history and a promising future.

Partners

- Rowan County Tourism Development Authority
  204 East Innes Street, Suite 120
  704.638.3100, 1.800.332.2343
  www.visitsalisburync.com
- Rowan County Register of Deeds
  Birth, Marriage & Death Records
  402 North Main Street
  704.326.8626
- Clerk of Superior Court
  Wills & Court Records
  202 North Main Street
  704.633.5946
- Rowan Public Library
  Edith Clark History Room, 3rd Floor
  Local Archives & Genealogy,
  Online Resources
  201 West Fisher Street
  704.216.8253 Fax:704.216.8237
  www.rowanpubliclibrary.org
- Rowan Museum
  Dedicated to history of Rowan County
  202 North Main Street
  704.633.5946
  www.rowanmuseum.org

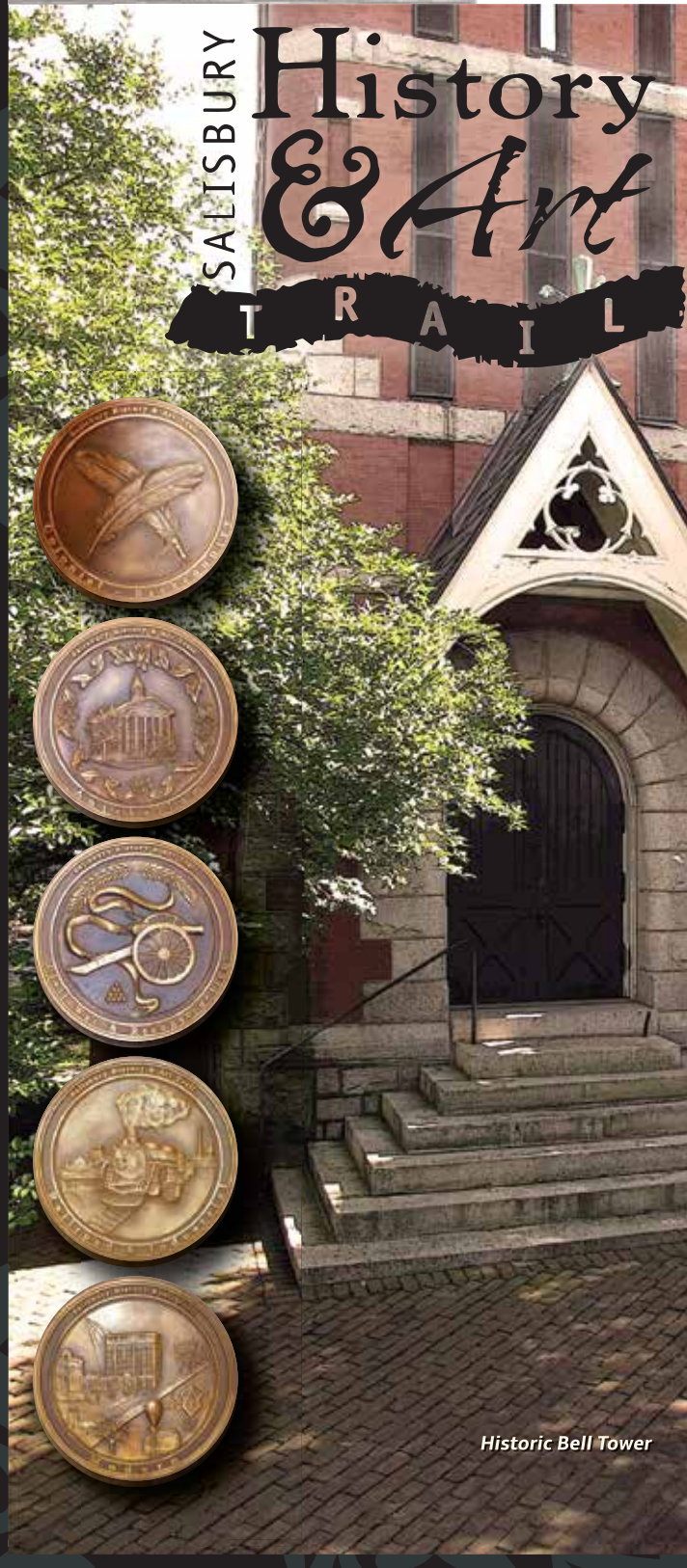
Sponsors

- Margaret C. Woodson Foundation
- Proctor Foundation
- City of Salisbury, NC
- Susan & Edward Norvell
- Blanche & Julian Robertson Family Foundation
- Travelers' Club
- Mary Berrier

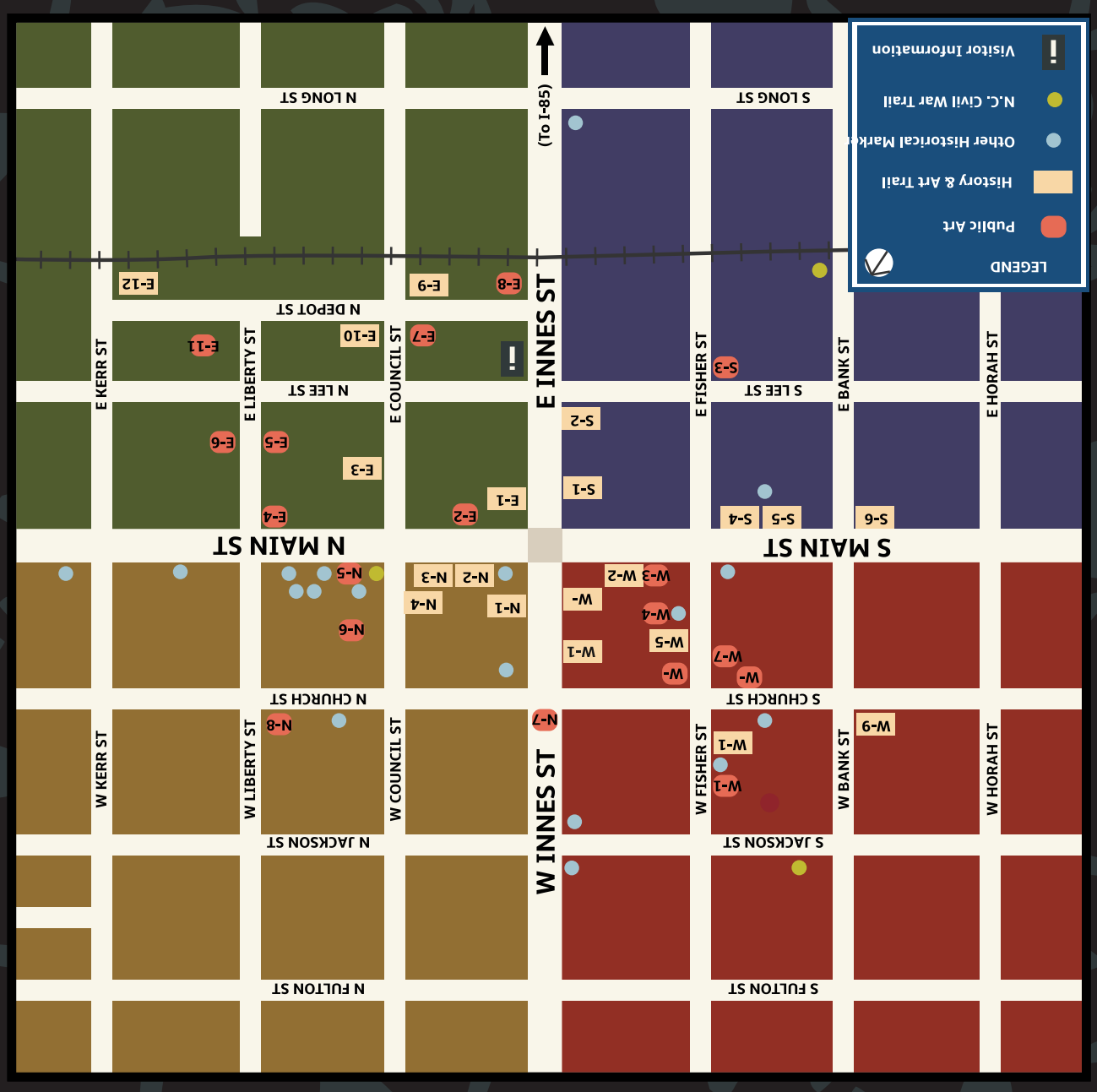
For further information, please contact the Urban Design Planner at (704) 638-5235

Contributions for future projects are appreciated. Please send tax-deductible donations to:

City of Salisbury, History and Art Trail
P. O. Box 479, Salisbury, NC 28145



Historic Bell Tower



Salisbury has a story to tell ...

Downtown Salisbury, Inc. and the Salisbury Community Appearance Commission want to celebrate the city's rich and diverse history with residents and visitors. They envision bringing the history to the streets where everyone can experience the people, events, and stories of Salisbury's past. They also recognize the strong relationship between a community's support of the arts and its economic vitality. The history and art trail is a natural fit for sharing Salisbury's story within its historic and downtown setting.

The long-range plan for the History and Art Trail is two-fold. First: A series of markers that incorporate both history and art are installed on downtown sidewalks and buildings in locations appropriate to the events. The markers are organized into five broad historic eras. Second: Over a period of time, a series of larger public art installations will complement historic and contemporary settings.

The best place to start the journey is at the Rowan Tourism Development Authority and Salisbury Visitor's Center, where you may gather more information on the city and pick up this brochure, and many more. However, the trail is designed to be experienced at any point, and does not require a particular order. Enjoy the journey, and please return as we continue to forge our Trail.

For further information on Salisbury's history and heritage, visit:

www.salisburync.gov/historyandarttrail/

Salisbury Sculpture Show

The annual Salisbury Sculpture Show features selected works by recognized sculptors from across the Eastern United States. Each piece is carefully sited within Salisbury's historic downtown, college campuses, sponsoring businesses, and sponsoring neighborhoods and is selected to highlight the best features of both the art and the surrounding architecture. The sculptures are on display from April through January each year.

www.salisburync.gov/sculptureshow
www.facebook.com/salisburysculptureshow/

Salisbury History and Art Trail

Colonial to Backcountry Era

N-7

W-9
Cornwallis
While occupying the town in February 1781, General Cornwallis commandeered local residences for himself and his officers.

1753

N-3
Elizabeth Maxwell Steele
During the Revolutionary War, General Nathanael Greene sought shelter in Elizabeth's tavern and was given two bags of silver to help continue the war effort . She was the mother of John Steele.

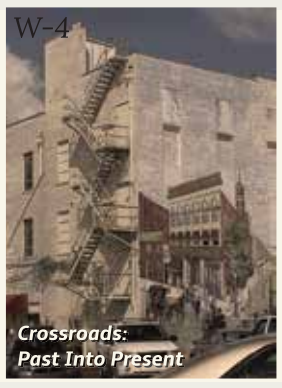
1791

N-5

1796

N-2
John Steele
Appointed by George Washington as the first comptroller of the United States, Steele served multiple terms in the North Carolina House of Commons. He died August 14, 1815 - the very same day he was elected to another term.

Antebellum Era



W-4

1850

W-1
Hinton Rowan Helper
Circa 1850, Hinton Rowan Helper was a young clerk in Salisbury, but soon captured national attention as the author of a controversial exposé on slavery.

1855

E-9
Coming of the Railroad
The day-long celebration, January 4, 1855, stretched into the evening with the official opening of the NC Railroad in Salisbury. With the railroad came sweeping changes, boosting the town's economy.

S-6
Banking on Bank Street
An imposing 2-story brick structure once dominated this corner where Salisbury Business Center is now located. From the early 1800s until 1889, it housed a series of banking establishments.

Civil War/Reconstruction Era

E-3
Joseph Ballard
The image of blacksmith and politician Joe Ballard was featured on three postcards published by Theodore Buerbaum - a testament to Ballard's popularity with the local townspeople. See W-2.

1861

E-8
Salisbury Arsenal
The Salisbury Arsenal occupied an expansive lot adjacent to the railroad during the Civil War. The arsenal was destroyed by Union General Stoneman as it was part of the Confederate supply hub.

1863

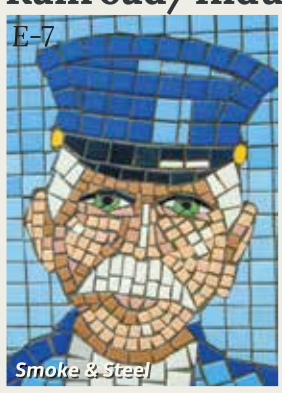
S-1
John Willis Ellis
Elected to two terms as governor, John Willis Ellis served at a pivotal time in North Carolina's history and led the state's secession from the Union in 1861.

W-5
Female Raid
Later known as the "Bread Riot", women protestors secured scarce food from reluctant merchants during difficult conditions of the war.

1869

E-1
William Valentine
A free man of color, Bill Valentine was a well-known and respected barber in the 1850s. While his wherabouts during the Civil War are unclear, he was open for business again in 1869.

Railroad/Industrial Era



E-7

1887

W-2
Theo Buerbaum
Theodore Buerbaum was a prominent civic leader, but his most lasting contribution to the community was his stunning photographs, which he published as postcards at the turn of the 20th century.

1888

W-6
Salisbury Cotton Mill
One of the first and largest textile mills in Rowan County resulted from a revival meeting held in a warehouse, which stood on this site. The wall is built of bricks from a razed local mill, inset with 87 tiles made by area school children.

1892

E-12
Rebecca at the Well
The fountain, a feature of the Robertson Eastern Gateway Park, is a replica of the one that graced the center of town from 1888 to 1905. The new one was cast from the original molds owned by Robinson Iron Works of Alabama.

1900

S-4
Meroney Theatre
The Meroney Opera House was built in the early-1900s. In its heyday, this facility brought well-known performers to Salisbury from New York and other areas. Stage productions are once again the featured attraction at the restored Meroney Theatre.

1905

N-6
Iron Fence
Located in the garden behind the Rowan Museum, this fence once encircled the fountain which stood in the center of town. In 1905 it was removed to make way for streetcar tracks.

1910

E-10
Sparks Circus
Excitement was at a fever pitch when the Sparks Circus arrived in Salisbury to spend the winter. During their sojourn, the circus executives made the Yadkin Hotel (now Yadkin House) their home and headquarters.

1911

W-10
Traveler's Club
A ladies' study club was instrumental in establishing the Rowan Public Library in 1911. The marker is located near the small Henderson Law Office, the library's first home.

Modern Era

E-4

1920

N-1
Rotary Club
Initiated in 1920, the Salisbury Rotary Club supported education, raising funds for high school and college, and later promoted agriculture. Their service to the community continues today.

1930

S-2
Death of Otto Wood
The demise of the infamous outlaw Otto Wood in 1930 after a scuffle with local authorities captivated the interest of thousands who turned out to view his body at a local funeral home.

1938

W-11
Frances Fisher Tiernan
The monument, dedicated in 1938, is a tribute to Salisbury's prolific writer, Frances Fisher Tiernan (1846-1920). Best known by her pen name, Christian Reid, she published over 40 novels.

1962

W-13
Integration
The days of segregated movie theaters in Salisbury came to a quiet end in 1962 following a protest by a group of Livingstone College students at the Capitol Theater which once stood on this site.

1979

W-4
Crossroads: Past Into Present
In 1979 the Rowan Art Guild commissioned Salisbury native and artist, Cynvia Arthur-Rankin, to paint this mural. It depicts downtown Salisbury circa 1900 and local citizens as models in vintage clothing.

1995

N-4
Wiley Immanuel Lash
Lash's self-service grocery on East Council Street - an important African-American business in downtown Salisbury, served as an informal hub for political activism and social services for the needy. Lash became the City's first black mayor.

2001

S-5
Sister Cities
Salisbury, North Carolina has valued its official sister-city relationship with Salisbury, Wiltshire, England since the 1960s, promoting cultural ties.

2004

E-5
Sculpture and Sensory Gardens
The Deal, Stanbach, and Cook gardens at the Waterworks Visual Arts Center showcase the variety of nature's forms, colors and textures for year-round enjoyment. Rotating exhibitions feature sculptures by area and region artists.

E-5

2005

E-11
Smoke & Steel
The mosaic mural containing over 100,000 tiles was designed and created in 2005 by Salisbury artist, Robert Crum. It was a project of the Salisbury Appearance Commission.

2006

N-7
Freedman's Cemetery
An early burial site of African-Americans. The wall conceptualized by artist Maggie Smith and dedicated in 2006 stands as a symbol acknowledging the past, challenging visitors to think about the present, and offers hope for the future.

E-7

2009

S-3
Sentinel #2
A 9-foot stainless steel sculpture by Salisbury artist Michael Baker as a centerpiece of Fisher Street Park.

2012

W-3

2015

W-8

2018

E-2

W-7

2018

W-12
Funky Jazz & Mariachi
Both sculptures by North Carolina artist, Jason Morris. These sculptures are made of 100% reclaimed steel and were inspired by live musicians Jason Morris saw in Raleigh and another large city down south.