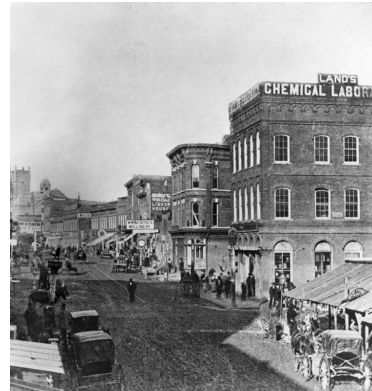


# What Peachtree Street Has Seen

## Scenes From the Storied History of Atlanta's Grandest Thoroughfare

The story of Peachtree Street is a story of change. Since Atlanta's early days, Peachtree Street has been a focal point of activity in the city. This is especially true for the apex of Peachtree Street, that section between Five Points and the Hyatt Regency. From the rich and powerful, to people from all walks of life, Peachtree Street has long held a special place in the lives of many Atlantans.



*Peachtree Street, 1875*

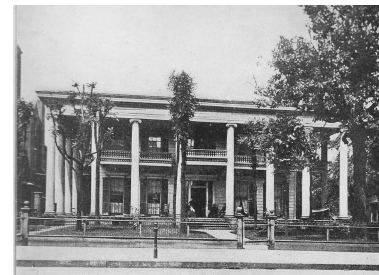


*Houses on Peachtree Street*

As the City continued to expand from the rail center, Peachtree Street became an prestigious address for many Atlantans. As the Civil War grew closer, what is now Peachtree Street, north of Five Points, was an address of choice for some well-heeled Atlantans. In images from the era, the homes that line the surrounding streets appear somewhat dwarfed by the land on which they sit. By contrast, the homes on Peachtree Street appear far larger.

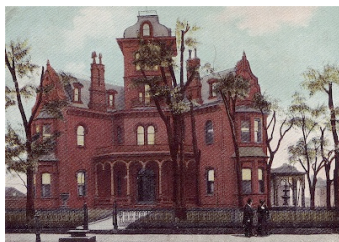
### As Mentioned in GWTW

One of these grand pre-Civil-War residences belonged to Austin Leyden, the founder of a metal casting factory. The façade of Leyden's Peachtree Street manse was marked by large, ionic columns. Not only did Leyden's home survive the War, it was also referenced by name in Margaret Mitchell's novel, *Gone With the Wind*. Today, where Leyden's house stood, the 200 Peachtree building – formerly the downtown Macy's store – was built.



*The Leyden House, mentioned in GWTW*

### Future Governor's Mansion



*House of banker John James, future Governor's mansion*

After the Civil War, houses continued to be built on Peachtree Street. One of these post-War houses was built in 1869 for John James. The businessman – and later, mayor – only lived in the large Victorian home for one year before selling it to the State of Georgia. For the next 51 years, it served as Atlanta's first Governor's mansion. By 1921, Peachtree Street had begun a metamorphosis from a residential space to a commercial center, and the house, by then in ill-repair, was vacated.

## Business Moves North of 5-Points

By the decade after World War I, Peachtree Street was undergoing another period of change. The grand homes were giving way to commercial sites. In the years to come, retail



*Peachtree Street, 1957*

department stores, such as Regenstein's and Macy's, were constructed. Eateries like the Frances Virginia Tea Room served guests. As the motion picture age gained momentum, visitors to Peachtree Street had multiple movie house options. And, long before the days of the Peachtree Plaza and the Hyatt Regency, Peachtree Street offered a number of lodging options for visitors, including the Majestic Hotel – which once stood on part of the current site of the 191 Building and the Winecoff Hotel – which, today, is known as the Ellis Hotel.

## Peachtree Street, Where Things Happen

But there has long been more to Peachtree Street than just homes and stores and a place to grab a meal or see a movie. Peachtree Street has been the site of some of Atlanta's most historic and most exciting events. These events include:

In 1895, the National American Woman Suffrage Association hosted its first conference outside D.C.. 2,000 attendees gathered at the ... Hotel – near the southeast corner of Peachtree and Ellis Streets

In December 1939, long before Atlanta became a popular site for the movie industry, Hollywood came to Peachtree Street. The Loew's Grand Theatre – located on what is now the site of the Georgia Pacific Plaza – hosted the world premiere of *Gone With the Wind*, the film based on the book by Atlantan Margaret Mitchell. Not quite 39 years later, in 1978, that same theater would be destroyed by fire.



*Premiere of Gone With the Wind*

In December 1946, a fire at the Winecoff Hotel – at the southwest corner of Peachtree and Ellis Streets – led to the deaths of 119 people. To this day, it remains the deadliest hotel fire in American history, and the second deadliest hotel fire in the world.



*Winecoff Hotel Fire, 1946*

Beginning with the first race in 1971, the Peachtree Road Race originally ended on Peachtree Street, at what was then known as Central City Park – now Woodruff Park. The end point was changed to Piedmont Park – where it currently ends – in 1978, to accommodate the increasing number of participants.

## Atlanta Loves a Parade

Then, there are the many parades. For those celebrating holidays, special events, sports victories, and notable visitors, Peachtree Street has been a scene of celebration. Among other occasions, these events have celebrated :

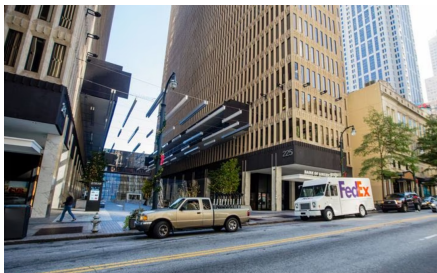
The end of World War I (1918)  
Atlantan Bobby Jones' golfing successes, 1930  
The 1996 Olympics  
The Gone With the Wind film premiere (1939)  
Years of Christmas holidays  
The Braves World Series wins in 1995 and 2021  
Even when the Braves made it to, but lost, the 1991 World Series, the city celebrated.



*Peachtree Street on "VJ Day"*

## Peachtree Street, Ever Evolving

As it has since its earliest years, Peachtree Street has continued to change. In the latter decades of the twentieth century, it morphed into a primarily corporate center, with towering office complexes replacing many of the retailers and entertainment options. John Portman's Peachtree Center development practically enclosed blocks of the city, almost making it possible to go from transit to office to restaurant and hotel without stepping foot on the thoroughfare.



*Portman Designed Peachtree Center*

There has been a movement to bring more life back to Peachtree Street. Onetime office towers, such as the Candler Building and the Rhodes-Haverty Building, have been repurposed for use as hotels. Other office towers, including part of the Peachtree Center complex, have been proposed as potential residential options. And programs like Atlanta Streets Alive have temporarily closed the road to cars, so that pedestrians and bicyclists can safely experience it.



*Candler Hotel, Hilton Curio collection*

Since the city's earliest days, Peachtree Street has undergone many metamorphoses. From residences to commerce center to business center, it has reinvented itself more than once. Whatever the future may hold, one thing is certain: Peachtree Street, like the city it calls home, will continue to change.

- Takeaways:**
1. Peachtree Street as a center of activity in downtown Atlanta
  2. Street has been at the center of a variety of events
  3. Peachtree Street nationally is Atlanta's signature thoroughfare

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