



Textiles to Technology



The Lowenstein Building (2018)

The University Center redevelopment project is quickly transforming the 23-acre center of Knowledge Park into a vibrant community to include a new athletic facility, restaurants, retail establishments, apartments, and hotels. The first phase of this project, the restoration of the Lowenstein Building above, was recently completed and now houses a number of tenants, including Atlas Copco, The Tuttle Company, Keck + Wood, Inc., and the White Horse restaurant.

Most locals, however, will recognize University Center as the site of Rock Hill Printing & Finishing, more commonly called The Bleachery. Built on the foundation of the former Anderson automobile manufacturing plant in 1928, the Bleachery would thrive for close to three-quarters of a century before shutting its doors and lying dormant - until new technologies and strategies breathed new life into a vacant site. In fact, the story of the current resurgence of the site is much the same as when it originally became The Bleachery.

In 1928, M. Lowenstein & Sons Company of New York was looking to build a facility in the South and was led to the former Anderson Automobile Company site located on West White Street. By the middle of that year, Rock Hill Printing & Finishing was incorporated and the existing Anderson plant was reconfigured for textile processing.

Despite the looming Great Depression, the facility opened with 400 employees by early 1929 and was able to maintain and hire additional employees, growing consistently each year so that within a decade, more than 1,800 were employed. While the years following the Depression were difficult, programs developed by the U.S. government assisted in providing for the needs of the impoverished, including an order of 32 million yards of cloth for mattresses and bedding from The Bleachery in 1934.

Lowenstein & Sons was constantly looking for means to improve employee morale without sacrificing benefits. An inter-departmental fast-pitch softball (continued on page 2)



Rock Hill Board of Historic Review

Preservation Month - May 2019

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Information about the Board of Historic Review, the City's locally designated historic districts, and preservation information is available online at cityofrockhill.com/historic. If you have any questions as to whether or not your structure is located within an historic district, or if you just general questions about historic preservation, feel free to contact Janice E Miller, janice.miller@cityofrockhill.com or 803.817.5129.

May is Preservation Month - Check out the National Trust for Historic Preservation page, savingplaces.org, to learn more.



league started in the spring of 1934 and quickly began to include teams from companies outside The Bleachery. That same year, the tradition of The Bleachery Christmas Tree Gala began as employees' children were given toys, candy, and other gifts at a large party.

World War II brought about a definitive end to the economic depression of 1929. The Bleachery contributed significantly to the war effort in producing more than 5 million yards of cloth for goods - uniforms, bedding, straps, canvas, duck, ticking, and so on -supplied to the U.S. and Allied forces overseas. In addition to goods, more than 1,200 employees of The Bleachery, including five women, enlisted to serve the country in the war and were greatly celebrated upon their return home.

The construction of the four-story Lowenstein Building administration building in 1953 established The Bleachery as the world's largest cotton and rayon printing and finishing textile plant under one roof. The facility also proved its ability to be adaptable as it moved into acrylic fiber production in partnership with the Celanese fiber plant also located in Rock Hill.

But for many, The Bleachery was much more than the products it manufactured; it was a way of life. Family was a central theme, with children following in their parents' footsteps on the plant floor. In fact, the company encouraged family employment with Father-Son teams and Mother-Daughter groups on the plant floor. By 1954, more than 1,130 employees had worked for the company for more than 10 years, and 330 of those had worked at The Bleachery for more than 20 years.

The company provided well for their employees. In addition to the annual Christmas gifts exceeding 75,000 toys for their children, Bleachery families had free access to the company's Joslin Park recreation area located outside the City limits on Lake Wylie, which included picnic and sports areas, playgrounds, swimming and boating areas, and Red Cross-certified lifeguards.

Sports were well-represented by Bleachery employees, including men's and women's basketball teams, and fast pitch softball team. Textile baseball teams had been a fixture at a number of mills beginning in the mid-1930s. The Bleachery had sponsored teams for two seasons but decided on building company morale by instituting the interdepartmental fast-pitch softball league instead.

The company also provided hospitalization and other medical care programs, free life insurance, first aid departments, and paid vacations. Children of employees were eligible to receive scholarships from the Low-

enstein Foundation to further their education.

The Bleachery hit its peak in the mid-1960s with more than 4,800 employed. Unfortunately, the textile industry began its move out of the United States as corporate entities began the search for lower production costs. By the mid-1980s, The Bleachery had been forced to release the majority of its workforce, and complete shut-down came about in 1998, as The Bleachery was the last of Rock Hill's mills to close.

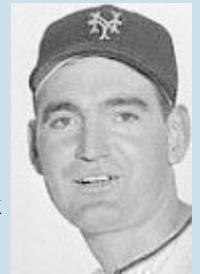
Unoccupied buildings tend to deteriorate rapidly, so it was no surprise that The Bleachery buildings fell into disrepair within several years. Fires eventually destroyed many of the newer buildings on the site.

Because the property was located in a highly visible area, City officials and private interests came together to formulate a plan for the redevelopment of the site. A first version of this plan, called The Textile Corridor Plan, was created with public input to identify potential new uses for the site. The Cotton Factory set an early precedent for the redevelopment of the area when it transitioned from a cotton manufacturing facility into a mixed-use office/retail complex.

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The Bleachery and World Series Baseball

Baseball had a huge local following in the mid-1950s, especially when a Bleachery employee, James Lamar "Dusty" Rhodes, played for the 1954 World Series Champs, the New York Giants.



Originally born in Mathews, Alabama, Rhodes had come to the area to play for the local team, the Rock Hill Chiefs. During the off-season, he was employed at The Bleachery in the Jack Room of the Print Department, handling heavy rollers on a regular basis - keeping him in tip-top playing shape. During the 1951 season, he went to play for Nashville, and was then called up in 1952 to the big leagues, playing the left field for the New York Giants.

His skill as a pinch hitter was his claim to fame during the series. The Giants were pitched against the Cleveland Indians, heavily favored to win. Rhodes, however, was able to astound fans by becoming the first player to ever hit a walk-off home run during extra innings of a World Series game.

Rhodes played for the New York Giants - and the subsequent San Francisco Giants - until September 1959, retiring to Las Vega, N.V. While he didn't return to his job at The Bleachery, Rhodes was fondly remembered by many of his co-workers.

What Makes a Great Place?

“Placemaking is a collaborative process of people coming together to reimagine and create great public spaces at the heart of their communities.”
- Project for Public Spaces

As part of the Knowledge Park Action Plan, the City of Rock Hill and the Quality of Life Committee of the Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation are partnering with The Project for Public Spaces and community members to create a Placemaking Master Plan. The Project for Public Spaces held a workshop on March 14 and 15th with these stakeholders to start this process. Approximately 40 people gathered to learn about placemaking strategies and to start to develop ideas to put into place through the Master Plan.

The group gave ideas for increasing the number of areas in Knowledge Park that make it a special place where people want to spend their time. Using a concept called “the Power of 10,” which suggests that every great place has at least 10 different components that attract people to it, the group focused on developing strategies to increase the reasons why people might go to the following five areas: the Amphitheater/Elk Avenue, Laurelwood Cemetery, the former Good Kia site on White Street, the Oakland Avenue area near the railroad tracks, and Fountain Park. The Project for Public Spaces will take this input and develop a draft Master Plan, which will be presented in June, with the consideration of the adoption of the final plan by City Council expected to take place in September.



Textiles to Technology (continued from page 2)

In more recent years, public-private partnerships continued to solidify, and a broader strategy for the redevelopment and rebranding of the greater Downtown area as “Knowledge Park” was born. The University Center site, located on the former Bleachery site, has recently begun a major transformation as part of this vision. Two of the remaining buildings on The Bleachery site, the Lowenstein Building and the 1939 Building, have been transformed through the conversion of empty office space to multiple uses, including offices and restaurants.

The next major accomplishment for the site will be the completion of the Rock Hill Sports & Event Center, expected to open in Fall 2019. This complex will add 12,500 square feet to the City’s wide variety of sports facilities, continuing to solidify Rock Hill’s status as one of the premier sports destinations in the southeast.

Enterprising minds and textiles founded Rock Hill, and the tradition continues today as community partnerships and technology continue to make Rock Hill the great City it is today.



Historic Rock Hill hosts a number of events at the White Home (258 East White Street). Contact Historic Rock Hill at 803.329.1020 for event pricing and more information.

**Sunday - May 26, 2:00 PM:
Goat Yoga**

Critter Creek Farm will bring goats for this refreshing take on yoga!

**Saturday - June 1, 6:00 PM:
White Home Wine Trail**

In partnership with grapevine Rock Hill, this Triple Crown-themed event provides guests with the opportunity to taste more than 40 wines with expertly prepared hors d'oeuvres.

**Thursdays - beginning June 6, 5:30 PM:
Lyrics on the Lawn**

This free event for the whole family features live music while enjoying a number of food truck offerings.



Old Town encompasses the historic downtown streets of Rock Hill and provides a number of family-friendly events that make our City unique. For a calendar and additional information about events, go to onlyintown.com.

Saturdays - 8:00 AM to Noon:

Old Town Farmers Market at Legal Remedy

From April to November local farmers bring direct to you everything from fresh produce to local meats. Products change as the season does so come early and often!

Fridays - 6:00-10:00 PM:

Food Truck Friday

The 3rd Friday of each month from May through October brings food trucks from all over the region so that everyone in the family can select from their favorite types of food! Live music and children's activities round out the evening. Bring a chair and set a spell!

Second Saturdays - All Day:

Think Big. Shop Small Saturdays

Support local merchants by shopping local on the second Saturday of each month. Most all downtown merchants offer discounts and/or special offers to customers.

Old Town Frogs - Everywhere, Everyday!

The newest residents of Old Town are 10 delightful frogs from all over the globe! Find a frog, take a selfie with it and post with #oldtownfrogs.

Ride Rock Hill's new bus system

The Rock Hill community will soon have the option of taking a bus from place to place around the City. This electric bus system has been in development for several years in order to better serve the transportation needs of citizens and visitors throughout the City. A partnership of the City of Rock Hill, Winthrop University, Piedmont Medical Center, and Family Trust Federal Credit Union has enabled the plan for a City-wide transportation system to become a reality.



The system will start with four routes, with a transit hub centrally located near the University Center area.

Route 1| Blue Route: Downtown/Knowledge Park Loop - 30-minute frequency

- Connect Winthrop University and Downtown Rock Hill via Oakland Avenue, Main Street, Black Street, Wilson Street, and West White Street

Route 2| Green Route: Saluda/Heckle Loop - 60-minute frequency

- Loop serving Saluda Street, Heckle Boulevard, West Main Street, Herlong Avenue, Piedmont Medical Center, and Constitution Boulevard

Route 3| Yellow Route: Cherry/Riverwalk Line - 60-minute frequency

- Route connecting Downtown Rock Hill, Winthrop University, and Riverwalk via Cherry Road

Route 4| Red Route: Dave Lyle/Galleria Line - 60-minute frequency

- Route connecting Downtown Rock Hill and Galleria Mall via Dave Lyle Boulevard

The Blue Route is scheduled to begin service on June 10, with full service of all four routes beginning on July 1.

The general service hours will be Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. However, the Blue Route will operate until 9 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Each bus is outfitted with free wi-fi, mobile charging ports, infotainment screens, and bike racks. Route maps and additional information are available online at myriderochhill.com. You can also follow on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at My Ride Rock Hill.



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For information on historic properties located in Rock Hill, please contact Janice E Miller, Historic Preservation Specialist, 803.817.5129, email janice.miller@cityofrockhill.com.

Additional information and research available online at cityofrockhill.com/historic