



Historic Ritz Theatre

Constructed circa 1939, the 500-seat Ritz Theatre was intended to bring a Hollywood-style professional movie theater to North Georgia. Over the course of many successful years, the Ritz Theatre served as a movie theater, community theatre, and a music hall, drawing thousands of Toccoa residents over the years.

After closing its doors in the early 1980s, the Ritz Theatre became the Schaefer Center, serving as home to Toccoa's community theater.

In 2014, the City of Toccoa took over the ownership and operation of the building. The City has renovated both the interior and exterior to bring back the original historic Art Deco Moderne exterior façade.

Most recently, the Fox Theatre Institute in Atlanta sponsored the installation of an historically-inspired neon-lit marquee, the Appalachian Regional Commission sponsored the installation of a state-of-the-art sound system, and the United States Department of Agriculture sponsored the restoration of the balcony and interior improvements.

Now, the newly-branded Historic Ritz Theatre at the Schaefer Center serves as a cornerstone for Toccoa events, community plays, and musical presentations.



Snapshots of Toccoa's History



114–118 N. Sage Street

By 1956, the building was also home to State Farm Insurance Company, headed by agents Miles C. Davis and Robert W. Service, in addition to Teasley's company. Its primary business, Stephens Federal Savings & Loan, was still in operation out of this location in 1956 before moving to the corner of Pond Street and Doyle Street in 1958. W. Truman Blasingame was the Executive Vice President of Stephens Federal Savings & Loan while operating out of this location.

In 1959, once Stephens Federal Savings & Loan moved to its new location, the business opened up to serve as the side entrance to the Andrews/Hamby Men's Store, with Mr. James A. Andrews as the President, and Mr. Earl H. Freeman as the Vice President. In the same storefront housing Mr. Teasley's business was Gulf Life Insurance Company, and State Mutual Insurance Company. By 1962, Carolina Life Insurance Company had also opened in the same storefront housing Gulf Life Insurance.

By 1968, the Andrews/Hamby Men's Store entrance closed and Carolina Life Insurance was gone, with Georgia Finance Corporation opening in its place. In 1971, Georgia Finance was gone, replaced by Landmark Finance Company. By 1973, State Farm Insurance moved out of this location, and later moved just down the street.

The architecture of 114/118 North Sage Street is consistent with that of the early- to mid-century Commercial style that populates the majority of Historic Downtown Toccoa. Large bay windows frame a singular transom window, allowing for maximum view into the storefront's interior on the left storefront, while the right storefront is slightly modernized, featuring stylized closed transoms framing the entry space. All brickwork is original to the structure.

Presently, this building houses two downtown businesses on the first floor: Russell's Tax Service, a CPA firm, which has been operating since at least 1982 (operating previously as James Russell Income Tax & Bookkeeping), and Angel Oak Home, a design consultant and home renovation storefront. The second floor of the building is occupied by fully renovated and expansive luxury loft apartments.

-Historical information has been provided with the invaluable assistance of Steven Gilmer and Stan Smith.

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