

Bus stop got its start on the corner of Bee Line and Lee

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Whether you were heading off to serve your country in Korea or just to visit your Granny in Kansas, you likely had to get on a Greyhound bus to get there if you lived in Athens around the mid-1900s.

Throughout the decades that the Greyhound bus has stopped in Athens, various businesses have served as the bus stop, but the stops all started on what was, at that time, the busiest corner in Athens: The intersection of Bee Line Highway and Lee Highway, modern-day Clinton and Washington Streets.

In November 1928, the enterprising L.C. Hightower saw that bus travel was quickly becoming the way to go, so he bought a lot from Dr. W.J. Hagan on the busy corner for \$16,000 and built a \$30,000 building that he then leased to R.A. Chambers & Sons for use as a bus station and garage. The building was designed for buses to enter the building from Clinton Street, circle through and exit on Washington Street.

The Chambers brothers, R.A. and Fred had already been running their own bus service since 1917, starting with a transfer service for passengers and baggage between Athens and Rogersville and soon adding trips to Huntsville.

From there they had added a city-wide bus line that charged a 10-cent fare per trip.

Once Chambers & Sons moved into the new bus station, the #7 Greyhound bus line began stopping there. Passengers could pay \$1.25 for a ride from Athens to Huntsville, joining the passengers who from Florence who had paid \$3.25 to get from their town to Huntsville.

Eventually Wilson White took over management of the bus station, operating that and the restaurant located inside.

In 1956 White built the Rebel Cafeteria on the corner of Market and Beaty Streets, facing the Big Spring, and moved the Greyhound bus terminal to the restaurant.

The Rebel remained open for more than 30 years as a bus stop and popular eating place before White closed the restaurant, due partly to his own health issues.

In the late 1990s, the Rebel Cafeteria building was torn down; however, the original bus stop building still stands, currently empty, on the corner of Clinton and Washington Streets.

About the Archives:

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