



WELCOME TO LAST CHANCE

The Complete Guide to **Last Chance, South Carolina**

Compiled and Edited by the

Christ Episcopal Ladies Auxiliary

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LOCATION

The incorporated town of Last Chance, South Carolina, situated at the western boundary of Allenberg County, is located in the region of South Carolina known as the Coastal Plains. This is a polite way of saying that Last Chance isn't close to the often-visited coastal region, nor is it located in mountains along I-85.

Last Chance sits smack-dab in the middle of the state.

Some folks think that means our town is neither here nor there, but that would be incorrect. We feel like we're right in the center of things.

The Edisto Indians once lived in area and gave their name to its most prominent geographical feature -- the Edisto River. The Edisto is the longest black-water river in America, and the City of Allenberg, the county seat, sits south of the Edisto's South Fork, in a region that was once a cypress swamp.

EARLY HISTORY

Our history begins with the first settlers, who came from Germany, Switzerland, Ireland and Scotland. Among these early pioneers, was an Englishman man named Thomas Rhodes who cleared a farm south of the Edisto River. By the early 1800s this plantation was producing a great deal of cotton for export to the newly-industrialized textile plants in England.

In order to feed this engine of commerce, the Charleston-Hamberg cotton railroad was built and reached Allenberg County in 1832. The railway brought many changes, as well as new development to the area. A railroad turnout to handle cotton shipments was built on Rhodes. The small village that sprang up around the railhead eventually came to be known as Chance's Turn, after the proprietor of the Rhodes Plantation, Chancellor Rhodes.



The Last Chance Train Depot

During the War Between the States, Allenberg fell on some hard times. The Yankees burned the Rhodes plantation to the ground. Chancellor Rhodes came home from the war to find his wife deceased, his land holdings in disarray, and tax collectors at the door. Leaving his young son, Jebediah, in the care of friends and freed slaves, Chance Rhodes journeyed to Atlanta, where it's told that he fell into wicked ways.

The legend has it that Chance got into a high stakes poker game in which he found himself holding four aces. Seeing this as his last chance to raise the taxes he owed on his land, Chance bet the everything he had, including his land. Unfortunately, Diamond Jim Marshall was holding a straight flush, king high.

When Chance Rhodes realized that he'd lost everything, he went to his boarding house, penned a letter to his son, and then shot himself. While no one now living has ever seen Chance's suicide note, but the legend has it that he called on the angels to watch over his young son, Jebediah.

Shortly after winning the plantation, Diamond Jim Marshall came to Chance's Turn and settled there. Using his poker winnings, he established a sawmill and exploited the heavily timbered land in the area. The South was rebuilding after the war, and lumber made James Marshall a wealthy man. He donated the land near the railhead for a proper town, and his sawmill brought in new settlers. Those who arrived at during the post-Civil War period began to call the place Last Chance, in reference to Chancellor Rhodes's unfortunate poker hand.

Jebediah Rhodes, Chancellor's son, did not fare very well after his father's death. He became a sharecropper, leasing the land his forebears had once owned. He also took the legend of the angels directly to heart. He was known to carry on conversations with a heavenly host -- even when he was sober, which wasn't all that often.

The town of Last Chance was formally incorporated in 1880, retaining its unusual name.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

The turn of the last century was a golden age for Last Chance. The town built a city hall, Edisto Elementary, and Davis High School. A thriving business district sprung up by the railhead, and Randall House, a hotel near the station, began to take in travelers and boarders.

In 1930, John Brooks built a movie theater featuring Moorish architectural details. The theater was named the Kismet, and operated continuously from 1930 until 1990 under the ownership of the Brooks family.

In 1933, Jeremiah Rhodes, one of Chance Rhodes's descendents, achieved a moment of local fame by growing a 200 pound watermelon. This watermelon was so large it broke every record kept by the Department of Agriculture. Being rightfully proud of his melon, Jeremiah loaded it on his Ford pickup and drove it all the way to Washington, DC where he presented it to President Roosevelt, himself, and had his picture made with the great man.

Upon his return to town, the residents of Last Chance hosted a small celebratory parade for Jeremiah, thereby starting a tradition that remains to this day. Every July, Allenberg County hosts one of the largest Watermelon Festivals in the South.

In 1935, the Coca Cola Company located a bottling plant in Last Chance. Folks strolling on Palmetto Avenue could stop by the large plate glass windows and watch their favorite soft drink being packaged. The bottling plant operated until 1975.



In 1948, the City Council decided to designate Last Chance as the Watermelon Capital of the World and repainted the water tower to resemble a tiger striped melon.

In that same year, the Marshall Family opened up Country Pride Chicken, a poultry processing plant that has gradually become the county's largest employer. The sawmill was closed down in 1953, and the Marshall Family's empire shifted from lumber to chickens.

In 1950, Ezekiel Rhodes, a World War II veteran and a fairly well-respected citizen of Last Chance, left his job at the chicken plant to go into business for himself. It's here, that the legend of the angels begins once again. Ezekiel claimed that angels had been speaking to members of his family ever since Chancellor Rhodes lost the farm in that poker game. In the case of Ezekiel, however, the angels must have been pretty specific in their messages, because Zeke bought a small plot of land south of town, bounded on one side by the railroad tracks, and built a miniature golf course dedicated to the Lord. He called this place Golfing for God.

Over the years Golfing for God has grown, and now includes a life-sized Noah's Ark with a petting zoo and 18 holes. The first nine holes are dedicated to the Old Testament and the back nine are dedicated to the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Golfing for God is now owned and operated by Zeke's son, Elbert Rhodes.

OUR BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Business District Today

Although Last Chance is not as large as it was in the middle of the last century, the town continues on and was recently designated as an historic landmark, because of the turn-of-the-century architecture that predominates the business district.

Some of the merchants you will find in Last Chance:

The Cut 'n Curl, owned by Ruby Rhodes, who is a licensed cosmetologist. The Cut 'n Curl is a wonderful place to get a quality manicure, all the local news, and borrow a steamy romance book from Ruby's impressive paperback library. The Cut n' Curl is located on Palmetto Avenue and you can't miss the pink and green awning.

Lovett's Hardware is directly across the street from the Cut 'n Curl. It's owned by Pete Whitaker, who bought from Jack Lovett and saved it from going out of business. Lovett's Hardware is one of those wonderful old hardware stores with worn cork floors, good advice, and lots of local knowledge about the growing seasons.

Dot's Spot is located on the corner of Chancellor and Palmetto. There is a small dance floor and live country music on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The local house band is The Wild Horses. Dottie Cox is the proprietor.

The Kountry Kitchen is a classic example of a 1950s diner, they serve pretty good barbecue, excellent coffee, and Apple Pie like your momma used to make. The Kitchen is owned by Fred Carter.

Bill's Grease Pit is the main auto repair service in town, and also doubles as the local Greyhound bus stop. Leroy Wilkins is the proprietor of Bill's, having bought the place from Bill a number of years ago. Bubba Lockheart is the main mechanic.

The Peach Blossom Motor Inn is located south of the main business district on Palmetto Avenue. This hotel used to be nice and clean back in the 1960s, but it's not the kind of place a decent person would want to stay at these days.

The Last Chance Public Library is located on Chancellor Street, next to City Hall. The library is a small extension of the Allenberg Library system. Our town librarian is Nita Wills, and the Last Chance Book Club meets Thursdays at 7:00 pm in the library.

WORSHIP

AME: The Allenberg AME church is located on state road 78 between Last Chance and the City of Allenberg. Rev. Clarence Brown, pastor.



Baptist: First Baptist of Allenberg County, located on Chancellor Street, across from City Hall. Rev. Michael Packard, pastor.

Catholic: St. Mary's Church is located on Main Street in the City of Allenberg. Rev. Thomas Weiss, pastor.

Episcopal: Christ Church, located on the Southwestern corner of Palmetto Avenue and Julia Street. Rev. William Ellis, pastor

Methodist: Methodist Church of Last Chance, located on the northwestern corner of Palmetto Avenue and Julia Street. Rev. John Reed, pastor.

RECREATION

The Edisto Country Club (private): located on the South Fork of the Edisto River, the Edisto Country Club is a private retreat for many of the citizens of Allenberg County. There are approximately twenty summerhouses located at the Country Club as well as an old-fashioned swimming hole. The Country Club hosts the annual Watermelon Pig Roast, during which time the swimming hole is open to the public. From time to time, the Country Club members will also host dance parties at their dancing pavilion.

The Jonquil House Hunting Lodge: The Jonquil House is located off an unpaved road, that intersects state road 321 just about three miles south of town. The lodge is closed most of the year except during pheasant hunting season.



The Painted Corner Stables. Dash Randall, a former major league baseball player, has founded a stable east of Last Chance. He raises American Paint horses there, and runs a program teaching the young folks how to ride and rope. He also boards horses.

The Allenberg County Watermelon Festival occurs the third week in July every year. Attractions include: a parade, a pig roast, a demolition derby, carnival rides, seed spitting competitions, and lots of live music and dancing.

There are many fraternal and service clubs located in Last Chance including: The Last Chance Garden Club, the Last Chance Book Club, The Christ Church Ladies Auxiliary, and the Friends of the Allenberg County Hospital. The Jaycees and the Lions are also active in our town.

GOVERNMENT

Mayor

Robert ("Big Bob") Thomas

Town Council

Kamaria LaFlore, Secretary

Leroy Wilkins, Treasurer

Buck Marshall

Lillian Bray

Dale Pontius

Police Force

Stonewall Rhodes, Chief

Damian Easley, Deputy



Last Chance, SC -- Down Town



- A-Bus Stop/Grease Pit
- B-Lovett's Hardware
- C-Cut & Curl
- D-Kountry Kitchen
- E-The Kismet
- F-Dot's Spot
- G-Bottling Plant (abandoned)
- H-Post Office
- I-Randall House
- J-Police/Courthouse/CityHall
- K-Donut Shop
- L-Christ Church
- M-First Baptist Church
- N-Last Chance Library
- O-Volunteer Fire Department
- P-Edisto Elementary School
- Q-Methodist Church

Notes:

The Peach Blossom Motor Court is South of Town on Palmetto

Elbert & Ruby Live on Calhoun east of Palmetto

Clay's House is on Baruch west of Palmetto

Golfing for God is a mile south of Town on State Road 321/Palmetto

The all night Rexall, Bi Low, and Dollar General are East of Town in a small strip center On State Road 78/Baruch

Jefferson Davis Highschool is South of town on State Road 321/Palmetto

Country Pride Chicken is South on Sate Road 321

The Country Club is North of Town on State Road 70.

