

## Visitors value improvements at AHC sites

More than a decade ago the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) began a series of major capital improvement projects at its historic sites. And the more than 375,000 annual visitors to the sites are beginning to notice these changes.

Fresh paint, restored collections, and lively programs are giving tourists and school children quality experiences.

"When tourists have good experiences, they stay longer, spend more money in the communities and urge their friends and families to visit," said AHC director Frank White. "It also gives school children a sense of pride in their state and a better understanding of our history."

"We realized that decades of deferred maintenance did not present these treasures in a way that really engaged tourists and students," said AHC sites director Mark Driscoll. "We also knew that we could not depend on the Alabama General Fund. We have been aggressively seeking other sources—private foundations and donors, federal grants, city and county funding, conservation and education bonds—and using it to match earned income." In Fiscal Year 2011, these sources accounted for more than \$865,000.

At **Pond Spring, The General Joe Wheeler House** is ready to reopen after being closed for nearly a decade. The AHC just completed the restoration of the Wheeler House, and site director Melissa Beasley plans to open the house in 2012. Also, site curator Kara Long catalogued the Wheeler family col-

lection, which is now displayed in the home.

"This is one of Alabama's premier landmarks. With its early native occupation, its plantation houses, outbuildings, and Wheeler's home and collection, it tells a story of 3,000 years of our history," said Driscoll. "The restoration of the Wheeler House and returning the Wheeler family collection has been a priority for the commission."

**Belle Mont Mansion** in Tusculumbia reflects an architectural style influenced by Thomas Jefferson. In 2007, the AHC completed the brick courtyard restoration. With the recent addition of an exterior restroom facility, Belle Mont can now host larger community events and private receptions.

**Fendall Hall** is a highlight of Eufaula's Annual Pilgrimage, which attracted 8,000 people in 2011. Visitors to this 1860 Italianate house will notice the cedar shingle roof and recently painted exterior.

Visitors at **Confederate Memorial Park** can tour the museum, built in 2007, or enjoy the park's nature trails. The museum features many weapons, uniforms, and flags. The grounds includes two cemeteries, a research library, a historic post office, and the historic Marbury Methodist Church.

Greensboro's **Magnolia Grove** is significant as the boyhood home of Spanish-American War hero and U.S. Congressman Richmond Pearson Hobson. Visitors to the site will appreciate the

newly painted front façade, trim, rear columns, and shutters.

Located in Mobile Bay, **Middle Bay Lighthouse** first operated in 1885 and still serves as a navigation aid today. The AHC acquired the lighthouse in 1977 and since 2002 has been working to restore it. This effort includes repairing the roof, the underwater structure, the windows, and the exterior.

Opening in May 2011, the **Freedom Rides Museum** is located inside the historic Montgomery Greyhound Bus Station. This project restored the façade, installed an award-winning exterior exhibit, and transformed the interior into a museum. The museum has attracted groups from across the country and gained national media attention.

**Fort Morgan** is one of Alabama's most popular Gulf Coast attractions. The AHC has stabilized five of the fort's casemates, rehabilitated the First Sergeant's House into a food service facil-

ity, and is currently developing interpretive Union siege lines.

The AHC has made various improvements at **Gaineswood**, a National Historic Landmark in Demopolis. Today, disabled visitors have easier access to the site. The house's exterior was recently painted to match the original paint scheme.

At **Old Cahawba**, the AHC relocated and stabilized two historic structures, built a nature trail, and stabilized the Crocheron columns. To help further develop the park, the AHC has built partnerships with The Nature Conservancy, The Cahaba Foundation, and the Cahawba Advisory Committee. These partnerships ensure that Cahawba continues to thrive and offer visitors a great experience.

At the **Alabama State Capitol**, the AHC has repaired the roof, painted the dome, and improved access for disabled visitors. More than 123,000 people visited this National Historic Landmark last year.



Pond Spring-The General Joe Wheeler Home in Hillsboro features 12 historic buildings surrounded by boxwood gardens, and three family cemeteries.

### SAVE THE DATE

**FEBRUARY 15** AHC DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD NOMINATIONS DEADLINE

**MARCH 1** 2012 PLACES IN PERIL DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS

**MAY 10-12** ALABAMA PRESERVATION CONFERENCE, BIRMINGHAM

[www.preserveala.org/currentissues.aspx](http://www.preserveala.org/currentissues.aspx)

**JUNE 14-16** NATIONAL ROSENWALD SCHOOLS CONFERENCE, TUSKEGEE

[www.rosenwaldschools.com](http://www.rosenwaldschools.com)

# AHC 2012 FEDERAL WORK PLAN

The federal work plan activities are designed to assist the state in meeting goals and objectives for historic preservation.

To comment on the plan contact:

Mary Shell  
P. O. Box 300900  
Montgomery, AL 36130-0900  
334.230.2691 / [Mary.Shell@preserveala.org](mailto:Mary.Shell@preserveala.org)

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Make presentations to the public on the environmental review program and Section 106. Attend meetings with project contacts to assist with review and compliance. Make site visits to assess National Register eligibility, to consult on mitigation measures and to address rehabilitation issues. Review Phase I, II, and III archaeology reports. Review development projects for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. Respond to inquiries on environmental reviews. Conduct biweekly Section 106 meetings to coordinate review of projects. Prepare Memorandum of Agreements and Programmatic Agreements. Maintain database to track projects. Research and develop a plan to implement a pilot project for an online Section 106 compliance program.

## PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY EDUCATION PROJECT

Provide presentations to the public and public officials on general significance of archaeological sites. Respond to requests for information on archaeological projects. Assist with a Mobile, Ala. workshop on historic archaeology and National Register requirements.

## NATIONAL REGISTER / ALABAMA REGISTER PROGRAMS

Provide National Register (NR) and Alabama Register (AR) information at workshops. Maintain database to track NR nominations. Respond to inquiries. Make site visits to assess for state or national eligibility. Review and prepare NR and AR nominations. Hold NR and AR Review Board meetings. Prepare AR and NR notification letters, public notices, and certificates. Digitize National and Alabama Register property information.

## PRESERVATION TAX CREDITS

Respond to requests for information on tax incentives program. Make public presentations on program and distribute information. Communicate with active tax credit project contacts and make site visits to review potential and active projects. Review Part I, II and III applications and forward to National Park Service.

## MAIN STREET

Continue to assist with developing Alabama's Main Street Coordinating Program by providing assistance and information to existing and potential communities. Provide Four-Point training for quarterly manager meetings, with portions of at least two meetings open to the general public.

## SURVEY AND CEMETERY PROGRAMS

Make site visits and provide consultation on archaeological resources and surveys. Respond to requests for information on the architectural survey program and make site visits to assess architectural survey issues. Work with Auburn University Montgomery to digitize architectural survey data. Monitor architectural survey grants and perform in-house surveys. Respond to requests for information about cemeteries. Make site visits to assess cemetery preservation issues and/or conduct cemetery surveys. Hold workshops on cemetery preservation, maintenance, and legal issues. Manage cemetery register program and review cemetery historical marker applications. Provide consultations on cemetery preservation and relocation and issue cemetery permits. Advise recipients of FY 12 state grant program for survey and cemetery projects.

## ASSIST STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Provide archaeological consultation on burial bill issues. Assist local preservation commissions with enforcement of local regulatory programs and commission membership requirements.

## EASEMENT PROGRAM

Provide information on historic preservation easements to the public. Assist property owners with developing preservation easements. Review development proposals on properties with easements. Develop local partnerships to assist with easement promotion and monitoring.

## CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CLG)

Develop and provide educational material and presentations on the CLG program. Make site visits to provide technical assistance, training and grant assistance to CLG programs. Provide information on CLG program and grants to interested cities. Review CLG applications from cities. Request and review annual reports from CLGs and recommend recertification or decertification. Conduct annual CLG training workshop and participate in other forums. Manage CLG grant program to ensure projects are in accordance with federal program standards. Provide regular e-news to CLG contacts and information on training opportunities. Attend regional meetings with elected officials. Attend and assist with the CLG Coordinators meeting at the National Alliance of Preservation Commissioner's Forum.

## PRESERVATION / CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE

Assist the public with technical preservation and design issues for historic properties. Respond to requests for information and make site visits to provide assistance. Advise recipients of the FY 12 state grant program for rehabilitation projects and the Secretary of Interior Standards.

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES

Review contract reports on resources at AHC sites. Participate in master planning and field archaeology at AHC sites. Coordinate maritime council activities and meetings. Advise recipients of FY 12 state grant program for archaeology projects.

## STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLANNING

Distribute approved plan to statewide constituents and by request. Provide plan on agency web site. Make presentations at regional meetings to planning and community development groups. Develop process to update state preservation plan and gather public input.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

Participate with Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) program to coordinate preservation objectives in program. Provide resources to ACE communities and at annual ACE conference. Participate in state Scenic Byways Advisory Council meetings and assessments of proposed state byways to adequately address cultural resources. Participate in Your Town Alabama workshop and organizational meetings to educate local leaders on preservation tools and programs. Participate in grant meetings sponsored by the staff of U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions.

## PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

Continue revising and maintaining website, produce and distribute the Preservation Report newsletter and initiate a quarterly e-mail publication for the Black Heritage Council. Develop and promote preservation awareness in general and specialized media through media releases, publications, presentations, events, heritage area development, and historical markers. Assist preservation partners in development of the annual 2012 statewide preservation conference and assist with the annual Black Heritage Council Forum. Collaborate with preservation partners in hosting the national Rosenwald School Conference in Tuskegee, Alabama.

*To protect, preserve, and interpret Alabama's historic places is the mission of the Alabama Historical Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office.*

# 2011 ANNUAL REPORT



The Freedom Rides Museum inside Montgomery's historic Greyhound Bus Station opened in May 2011. The museum features 15 artists who tell the Freedom Rides story in their own unique way through their art.



Mobile's Hall-Ford House is a certified tax credit project, and now operates as a hotel. The developer invested more than \$2 million in the project and received a 20% federal tax credit. For every \$1 million spent in historic rehabilitation in Alabama, 26 jobs are created and \$806,000 in household income is added to the state's economy.\*

\*source: Don Rypkema, PlaceEconomics



The AHC partners with Auburn University's Environmental Institute every year to teach students about archaeology at the Wilcox County Field Days. This year 70 students from the Camden School for the Arts & Technology participated in the workshop.

*Helping people protect, preserve, use, and interpret our historic buildings, towns and archaeological sites.*

In FY 2011, the Alabama Historical Commission:

Welcomed **375,724** visitors to our historic sites to learn and experience our history at the places it was made.

Attracted **91,784** visitors to our website.

Responded to **18,206** requests for information and assistance in understanding, protecting, and interpreting Alabama's historic and pre-historic treasures.

Reached **5,800** people with the Preservation Report newsletter.

Garnered **308** media stories on AHC programs, events, historic sites, and staff members. The Freedom Rides Museum opening generated positive stories in over **500** media outlets worldwide.

Organized, sponsored, co-sponsored or presented at lectures, conferences, workshops, public presentations, hearings, or special programs at our historic sites, reaching **40,100** people.

Responded to **126** requests about endangered properties and monitored 251 properties on the Preservation Watch List.

Acquired **\$865,654** in private and public funding for the development and interpretation of AHC historic sites.

Added **2,301** historic buildings, sites, and structures to the Alabama Inventory.

Listed **10** entries in the National Register of Historic Places, a nationwide listing of America's places worth preserving.

Assisted owners of **4** properties qualify for federal rehabilitation tax credits, resulting in over **\$5.6** million in private investment in Alabama's historic places.

Listed **47** entries in the Alabama Register of Landmarks & Heritage.

Listed **52** cemeteries in the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register.

Provided guidance and assistance to **29** cities with historic preservation ordinances protecting over **13,526** historic houses, schools, community buildings, commercial buildings and places of worship.

Reviewed **8** permits for actions that affect cemeteries.

Reviewed **1,917** federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects for impacts on historic resources, clearing 1,611 on first review.

Engaged **1,223** volunteers in **13,338** hours of assistance at AHC historic sites.

Protected **87** properties with easements.

Educated **244** people about the national Main Street small town, downtown economic development program.

## AT THE AHC

### Three people join AHC staff, one hired for GIS project

Originally from Demopolis, Lindsey Roland began working for the AHC in September as an account clerk. Roland is assisting with the agency's payroll and inventory management system. She previously worked in the state Treasury Department for four years. Roland replaces Gail Marchant who retired.



Lindsey Roland

John Hoome began as the resource education specialist at Fort Toulouse/Fort Jackson in September. Hoome has served in the National Park Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the Alabama Wildlife Federation. He holds a bachelor's and a master's degree from Troy University.



John Hoome

New Fort Morgan site director Brian O. Hill brings more than 30 years of experience to the AHC. Prior to being named site director, Hill served as the director and curator of the Trenton City Museum in New Jersey for 13 years. Hill started working at Fort Morgan on January 3.



Brian O. Hill

Montgomery resident Kate Geesey recently graduated with honors in sociology from Auburn University Montgomery. Geesey also earned a certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). She began on November 1 and is working part-time on the AHC GIS database project.



Kate Geesey

### AHC says goodbye to two employees

Gail Marchant, who served the AHC for 14 years and the state for almost 39 years, retired in September. Marchant served as a payroll clerk and inventory specialist for the AHC. She still works part-time a few days per week, helping the agency manage its inventory.

Marchant is looking forward to spending more time with her grandchildren.

Retiring in October, Ceasar Jones worked as an artisan in the historic sites division for 18 years. Jones not only restored historic sites, but he also was responsible for maintaining the AHC's main office complex.

Jones enjoys the outdoors and plans to spend his newfound time hunting and fishing.

### Two new Freedom Rides publications

The AHC recently published a catalogue for the Freedom Rides Museum exhibit, *Road to Equality: The 1961 Freedom Rides*. The catalogue features the exhibit's artwork and the artists' inspiration for their work. It is on sale for \$12.95 at the museum, which is open Friday and Saturday from 12-4 p.m. For group tours, call (334) 242-3935.

The AHC and New South Books co-published *Freedom Rides In Alabama: A Guide to Key Events and Places, Context, and Impact* by Noelle Matteson. Matteson tells the story of the Freedom Riders' experiences in Birmingham, Anniston and Montgomery. Much of the book focuses on the Freedom Riders' arrival in Montgomery.

[www.newsouthbooks.com/freedomrides](http://www.newsouthbooks.com/freedomrides)

## PRESERVATION REPORT

Alabama Historical Commission

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**Bill Denson** *Chair*  
**Frank W. White** *Executive Director*  
**Ellen Mertins** *Executive Editor*  
**John Greene** *Managing Editor*

Please e-mail address corrections to: [jgreene@preserveala.org](mailto:jgreene@preserveala.org)

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ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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