PRESERVATION

Alabama Historical Commission
REPORT

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Economic growth a product of historic preservation

Jobs, Economic Development and Alabama's Heritage

If you watched any of Alabama's downtown success stories in the past decade, you know historic places are powerful economic development tools.

Once-vacant buildings are now offices, event spaces, restaurants and loft homes. New small, independently owned businesses are springing up. Visitors are walking about and spending money in restaurants, shops and bed and breakfast inns.

These once deserted areas are now destinations.

This is the result cities get when they understand their historic buildings are economic assets. Places like Montgomery, Gadsden, Opelika, Eufaula, Athens, Florence, and Decatur—to name a few.

Creates high-wage construction jobs

Each year the Alabama Historical Commission helps the private sector invest an average of **$17.4 million** fixing up privately-owned commercial buildings. This generates an average of **400 jobs** and **$14 million** in household income for our economy.

Nationally recognized economist Donovan Rypkema calculates that $1 million spent on rehabilitating buildings in Alabama creates 26.5 jobs. And adds $806,000 in household income to the state's economy. It creates 6 more jobs and $230,000 more in income than $1 million spent on new construction, and 9 more jobs and $290,000 more in income than $1 million of manufacturing output in Alabama.

Currently, private sector plumbers, masons, electricians, painters and carpenters are at work making long overdue repairs to historic places the Alabama Historical Commission opens to the public. So are 17 Alabama architectural, engineering and construction firms—companies hard hit by the current downturn.

Increases property values

We know renovating historic buildings returns vacant or rundown properties to tax rolls. But preservation also increases property values in another way.

We help cities and towns create and maintain historic districts to protect our historic downtowns, small towns and neighborhoods.

We asked economist Dr. Keivan Deravi at Auburn University Montgomery if this had a measurable dollar value. He found buildings in historic districts had stronger property values than those that were not.

Property values in Decatur's Old Town District increased 29% more than the value of similar properties outside of the historic district. In Mobile's Leinkauf Historic District the increase was 60%.

Painters work on an historic home that is a law office in Montgomery.

Generates tourism dollars

We also asked Dr. Deravi to look at how historic places help generate tourism dollars. He estimated that people visiting historic sites in Alabama create 5,900 jobs and $96 million in payroll each year. That means $5.1 million in state sales and income revenues come from heritage tourism in Alabama.

Last year 340,000 visitors came to the Commission's historic sites—the Alabama Capitol, Fort Toulouse-Fort Jackson, Fort Morgan, Belle Mont, Pond Spring-The General Joe Wheeler Home, Fendall Hall, Old Cahawba, Magnolia Grove, Gaineswood, Confederate Memorial Park, Fort Mims and Montgomery's historic Greyhound Bus Station.

They came to learn about our history. But they also bought gas, ate a sandwich in a local café, shopped in a local store and stayed in Alabama hotels. The Selma Chamber of Commerce says visitors to Cahawba add over $1 million to the local economy.

Economic impact of preservation funding cuts

When we cut the agencies and programs that help create jobs and tax revenue streams, we create a downward spiral that results in the loss of private sector jobs and lower sales, income and property tax revenues.

When we fail to maintain our historic downtowns, neighborhoods and landmarks, entrepreneurs and industries looking to relocate look elsewhere.

When we fail to maintain our historic parks and museums, heritage tourists take their dollars to other states.

When we underfund preservation, we place jobs, economic development and Alabama's irreplaceable heritage at risk.

EVENTS MARK 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FREEDOM RIDES • MAY 19-21

On May 20, 1961, a group of black and white students got off a bus at Montgomery's Greyhound Station. Their non-violent response to a waiting mob helped end racial segregation in interstate travel.

The events that day turned this ordinary building into a landmark. It stands as a monument to the power of nonviolent protest to end unjust laws.

Freedom Riders, including Jim Zwerg and Congressman John Lewis, return 50 years to the hour to mark the anniversary at the station. After a brief ceremony, The Freedom Rides Museum at the station will open with *Road to Equality - The 1961 Freedom Rides*.

The Road to Equality features 15 artworks created for the year-long exhibit. The existing exterior panels tell the Freedom Rides story with participants' words and images. The artworks add another way to explore this history.

The museum includes a story quilt by Nora Ezell and a "Share Your Story" video kiosk. Places in the building show how it was designed for racial segregation.

The bus station is located at 210 South Court St.

See page three for event schedule

Florala Historic District listed to National Register

The Florala Historic District in Covington County was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 21, 2010. The district encompasses several blocks along Fifth Street and Fifth Avenue, as well as portions of Fourth Street and Wall Street.

The district encompasses buildings dating from the late 19th century through 1951. These resources illustrate small town development in Alabama's Wiregrass region in the first half of the 20th century. Most of the district's historic houses are of the Queen Anne style, with the James Thomas Hughes House being the most significant.

The L & N Depot represents Florala's railroad history. The Percy S. McClung Armory, funded by the New Deal, reminds us of the federal government's commitment to creating jobs and promoting national defense during the Great Depression. The former Franklin Ferguson Company building on Fourth Street reveals Florala's industrial history. Finally, the district houses commercial buildings including the Masonic Lodge (originally First National Bank of Florala) and the Flatiron Building.

Fifth Avenue in downtown Florala

To learn more about the National Register, contact
Susan Enzweiler: 334.230.2644
susan.enzweiler@preserveala.org

www.preserveala.org/nationalregister.aspx

National Park Service - National Register web resources

www.nps.gov/nr/faq.htm
www.nps.gov/nr/sample_nominations.htm
www.nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

Montgomery establishes first cemetery authority in state

On June 1, 2010, the City of Montgomery created the Lincoln Cemetery Rehabilitation Authority (LCRA). LCRA is the state's first cemetery authority set up under Act 2007-408. This act grants city and county governments the power to establish cemetery rehabilitation authorities to oversee the documentation and maintenance of neglected cemeteries.

The City Council appointed five LCRA members who will serve three-year terms. The LCRA is charged with identifying, cataloguing, and recording burials in Lincoln Cemetery according to AHC standards. Moreover, the LCRA will maintain the cemetery through volunteer efforts and an established trust fund that has already received donations.

The American Securities Co. established Lincoln Cemetery in 1907 as an African-American commercial cemetery. According to the Alabama Register file, the cemetery retains its original landscape design plan influenced by the Olmstead-era cemetery movement. Circular roads meander through the once neatly landscaped plots. Since the 1940s, Lincoln Cemetery has fallen into disrepair as subsequent owners failed to properly maintain it.

Many burials are of state and local significance. These include Rufus "Tee-Tot" Payne, a mentor to Hank Williams; Hugh Carson, an Alabama legislator during Reconstruction; Ben Moore, namesake of Montgomery's Ben Moore Hotel where Martin Luther King, Jr. stayed and held strategic meetings; and Aurelia Browder, a plaintiff in the federal lawsuit that ended segregation in Montgomery's public transportation system.

The LCRA has organized several work days with community volunteers who have spent many hours working to improve the grounds. In February, a group from Maxwell AFB cleared a large portion of the overgrown landscape. Due to this community-wide effort hundreds of unmarked graves are now visible.

credit: Lee Anne Wofford

Wheeler House construction supports 20 jobs in north Alabama

Restoration projects at Pond Spring-The General Joe Wheeler Home have provided employment for 20 high-skill, high-wage construction workers in north Alabama.

Carpenters from H & N Construction of Florence began working on the Wheeler House in August, 2010. The company is no stranger to the historic site, as it completed phase one structural repairs on the Wheeler and Sherrod houses in 2008.

The project has generated significant revenue for the company, which has devoted five employees to the project. It also is another example of historic preservation supporting local economies.

"H & N is very proud to be associated with this project. Since we finished the first phase, it was important for us to complete the rest of the project," said vice president Trav Hovater. "It will certainly be an asset to our portfolio of completed historical projects. The project has been challenging due to the nature of the construction, but everyone involved has worked very well together to make this a successful project."

H & N has a solid track record of restoring historic buildings in Alabama. The company restored the neoclassical Fayette County Courthouse (1912) in 2000, the Tuscumbia Train Depot (1888) in 2006, and most recently the First Presbyterian Church (1827) of Tuscumbia.

Workers at Wheeler House L-R: Ronnie Peck, Pedro Torres, Margarito Flores, Chuck Lee, Eric Lee

FREEDOM RIDES 50TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS IN MONTGOMERY

THURSDAY, MAY 19

12:00 p.m. ***The Freedom Riders Come to Alabama***, Dr. J. Mills Thornton
Architreats, Alabama Department of Archives and History
624 Washington Avenue

FRIDAY, MAY 20

10:15 a.m. ***The Road to Equality—the 1961 Freedom Rides***
Featured Speakers: Freedom Riders John Lewis and Jim Zwerg
Opening of exhibit and Freedom Rides Museum
210 South Court Street

10:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. **Museum tours and book signings**
Freedom Rides Museum, 210 South Court Street

11:00 a.m. **Dedication of the Frank M. Johnson Library**
Federal Courthouse, 1 Church Street

12 - 4:00 p.m. **Downtown Civil Rights Sites Trolley Tours**
(tours leave from museum every half hour)

6:00 p.m. **1961 Mass Meeting Commemoration**
Freedom Riders reflect on May 1961 events
First Baptist Church, 347 North Ripley Street

SATURDAY, MAY 21

11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. **Museum Tours**, Freedom Rides Museum
Downtown Civil Rights Sites Trolley Tours

For more information: **www.montgomerybusstation.org**

Former BHC intern is "On the Bus"

Stephanie Burton is one of 40 students who won a place on a PBS-sponsored re-enactment of the 1961 Freedom Rides. A former Black Heritage Council intern, the Montgomery native is a journalism major at Florida A & M University.

The students, joined by several original Freedom Riders, will blog and tweet their way along the route Freedom Riders took in 1961.

Their topic? The nature of civic engagement in the internet age. The tour promotes an American Experience documentary, *FREEDOM RIDERS*, which airs nationally on May 16.

The students will be in Anniston on May 11, Birmingham on May 13 and at Montgomery's First Baptist Church, 347 N. Ripley Street on May 14. The full 2 hour version of the documentary will air at First Baptist. The event is free to the public.

For full details go to:
pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/freedomriders

Alabama's history collections endangered

In north Alabama, letters written by a young Helen Keller are fading away after being exposed to light for more than 120 years. Drawings and paintings by German soldiers imprisoned in the state during World War II are endangered by humidity in west Alabama.

Pieces of Alabama's past are in danger of being lost. And with little state funding available, museums, libraries and historical groups are applying for private and federal grants, raising money and forging new partnerships among themselves in an attempt to save important artifacts.

"We're losing a lot of our history because we don't have an ability to preserve it," said Mary Bess Paluzzi, executive director of the Aliceville POW Museum and Cultural Center. Some 6,000 German soldiers were housed at Camp Aliceville as prisoners of war during World War II.

Paluzzi said the items in danger include a large German landscape that was painted in oil on a sheet of pressed wood that once was part of the wall at the hospital.

At Ivy Green, Helen Keller's birthplace in Tuscumbia, director Sue Pilkilton is worried about the lack of lighting designed to eliminate harsh rays that can fade materials.

A recent study commissioned by Alabama Cultural Commons, a consortium of five historical organizations, evaluated the extent of the problem. The study was part of a $39,610 federal grant awarded to the Alabama Historical Commission. The research asked 1,403 sites or groups to assess their collections.

The survey found that moisture or water has damaged 51 percent of collections, and that 43 percent of archive materials have been damaged by pollution. About 90 percent of those surveyed lacked an up-to-date, long-range plan for preserving artifacts, but about two-thirds had not applied for any outside funding for preservation over the past three years, with many saying they didn't know such funds were available.

Most distressing to organizers was the finding that more than 70 percent of groups didn't know enough about their collections to assess their condition.

The survey found that only 18 percent of groups in the state set aside any money for preservation, and 25 percent of those spend less than $3,000 annually.

Given the lack of state money available for such work, preservation groups are looking to each other for expertise and to private and federal sources for help, said Clyde Eller, chief curator for the Alabama Historical Commission.

Eller said leaders of preservation groups have developed a plan that includes improving storage spaces or building facilities that are suitable for protecting artifacts; hiring or training staff for preservation; developing plans and procedures for inventory assessment and preservation; and preparing for disasters like floods, which can quickly destroy documents and other items stored in areas like courthouse basements.

To fund the work, officials are developing ways to share information about grants and fundraising techniques, she said.

"You need to be vigilant about it and try to maintain basic environmental standards and handle things as carefully as possible and seek funding when you need it," Eller said. "These types of artifacts are essential because they tell a story of a people and a region."

alabamaculturalcommons.org

adapted with permission from story by Jay Reeves, Associated Press

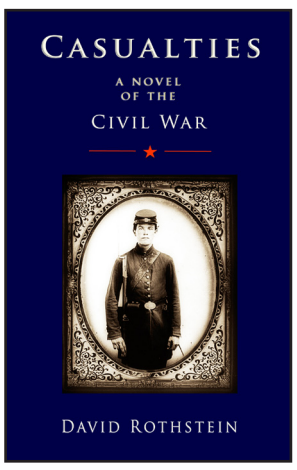
Cahawba the setting for *Casualties* by David Rothstein

David Rothstein has written *Casualties*, a historical novel that is set in and inspired by Old Cahawba. The novel, based on a true occurrence, is the story of Laura Connor who in the spring of 1864 sets out alone from her home in Indiana driving a wagon and a team of horses. Conner is determined to rescue her husband Thomas, a captured Union soldier named Thomas, from the Confederate prison at Cahawba.

Clearly moved by Cahawba, Rothstein writes, "If you go to Cahawba today and sit quietly under the cedars and live oak trees, you will feel the spirits of the people who lived and suffered and died there. If you stand in the center of the space that was the prison warehouse, you can trace the outlines of the place in the remains of the brick foundation where the prisoners were once kept, and they will speak to you. It feels as if Cahawba is still holding its breath."

Rothstein participated in Old Cahawba Park Day on April 2, and signed copies of his book.

The novel is for sale at the Cahawba Visitor Center, the Goat Hill Museum Store inside State Capitol, and online. For more information, go to:



www.amazon.com/Casualties-Novel-Civil-War-1/dp/1453877029

STATEWIDE REPORT

Montgomery's Garden District neighborhood recognized

This Old House magazine (April 2011) recently named Montgomery's Garden District as one of 64 "best old house neighborhoods." The editors chose one neighborhood from each state, plus one each in Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia and 12 Canadian cities. The list features neighborhoods with "promising futures, strong communities, and homes that truly deserve a long-term commitment," according to the article.

Also included in the criteria: "Architectural diversity, craftsmanship of the homes, and the preservation momentum in the area as well as neighborhood amenities including walkability, safety and community."

www.thisoldhouse.com/best-places

Evergreen nonprofit to transform school into cultural center

The Conecuh County Cultural Center Foundation (CCCCF) plans to restore the historic Evergreen City School and create a cultural center. This adaptive reuse project will preserve the building's integrity and give it new life. Dothan architect Joe Donofro is designing the restoration, and the foundation is actively raising funds.

www.conecuhcountyculturalcenter.org

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$150,000 raised to create Bryce Memorial Garden

The Bryce Hospital Historic Preservation Committee recently announced that it has raised $150,000 to build the Bryce Memorial Garden. The memorial will be built on land overlooking Jack Warner Parkway.

As part of the memorial, a granite and steel triangular monolith will be built and a fence will enclose the area that may contain infant burials. Tuscaloosa architect Evans Fitts designed the memorial at no cost.

For more information on the project, contact Steve Davis, historian at the Alabama Department of Mental Health, at 205-759-0711 or steve.davis@bryce.mh.alabama.gov or visit:

www.mh.alabama.gov/brycehospitalproject

Fort Morgan Tuesday night Candlelight Tours begin June 7

Fort Morgan begins its annual 1861 Civil War Candlelight Tours on Tuesday, June 7. Held every Tuesday night during June and July, the one-hour tours begin at 7 p.m. Uniformed interpreters entertain guests with tales of heroism. The Southeastern Tourism Society named the tours a Top 20 Event in 2009.

Tickets are $5.00 for adults, $4.00 for seniors, $3.00 for children 18 and under and free to those under six. A family pass for two adults and two children is $12.00.

For more information, contact the fort at 251-540-7127, or fortmorgan@centurytel.net

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