

PRESERVATION

Alabama Historical Commission
REPORT

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2012 Places in Peril Highlights Threatened Historic Buildings and Sites

Alabama has eleven new “officially” endangered places, according to the Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation. This year’s *Places in Peril* roster includes three thematic listings and eight individual properties, including a rare antebellum Masonic lodge.

Threats include difficulty in finding restoration funds, new uses and sympathetic owners for vacant building. A location near a university often attracts buyers only interested in building student housing. For some types of structures—like cotton gins—changes in technology made the

buildings obsolete.

According to Frank W. White, Executive Director of the Alabama Historical Commission, “*Places in Peril* is a valuable tool to show Alabamians some of the landmarks we may lose if we don’t take action.”

Melanie Betz, who coordinates the program at the Commission, notes that *Places In Peril* publicity has helped spark some spectacular successes, like the Lyric Theatre in Birmingham. The 1914 building is the city’s oldest surviving theatre and features hand-painted murals. When restoration is complete, the Lyric will once again welcome patrons



Old Masonic Lodge, Russell County. Credit: Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

to enjoy performances. To see more about the Lyric go to <http://savethelyric.com>

Since 1994, the Commission and the Alabama Trust have joined forces to sponsor *Places in Peril*. Now in its 19th year, the program annually highlights some of Alabama’s most significant

endangered historic landmarks. More than 200 properties have been listed. *Places in Peril* is modeled after the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Eleven Most Endangered Properties.

A complete list of Alabama’s 2012 Places in Peril is on page 3.

Looking for Summer Fun? Spend Time in Alabama History

Are you looking for active outdoor recreation? Or are you looking for an easier adventure? Do you revel in antiques and old buildings? Are you interested in colorful characters? Or would you rather see what contemporary artists have to say about a major turning point in our nation’s history?

“Our historic places have something for everyone,” says AHC director of historic sites Mark Driscoll. “Whether you are young or old, have an hour, an afternoon, a weekend or a week, you can indulge your personal passion and have fun.”

In South Alabama, **Fort Morgan** offers fishing, beach access, birding, and astonishing brick architecture at one of the nation’s premier Civil War sites. Tuesday night Twilight Tours are always packed and riding the ferry across the bay is always fun. Recent visitors are giving the fort’s newly-constructed siege line rave reviews.

Just up the road at **Fort Mims**, you can experience the attack that started the 1813-1814 Creek War. Then you can travel north to **Fort Toulouse/Fort Jackson** and see where the Creeks surrendered. Plan to stay long enough to learn about the earlier 18th century French outpost.

At **Old Cahawba** near Selma, a canoe trail and miles of bike trails with free bikes available lure active visitors. Archaeological finds, a cemetery and ghost stories appeal to folks with active imaginations. Need to cool off? Go stick a toe in the famous artesian well. Then learn how it once helped cool an antebellum home in an early version of air-conditioning.

While you are in the Black Belt, go west where antebellum planters built fabulous Greek Revival homes. **Magnolia Grove** in Greensboro is the iconic Deep South planter’s mansion. And the most famous owner



Magnolia Grove. Credit: Alabama Tourism Department

was a war hero. But he was also a progressive politician who championed women’s rights and civil rights. Over in Demopolis, **Gaineswood** was designed by its amateur architect/owner. It is nationally recognized for its fresh interpretation of Greek Revival.

Or you could head east to Eufaula, an antebellum river port where cotton merchants favored the Italianate style. **Fendall Hall**, with its exquisite interior murals, illustrates the fabulous wealth cotton continued to bring merchants after the war.

Alabama’s State Capitol with its Civil War and Civil Rights history brings school kids and foreign visitors alike to Montgomery. Everybody marvels at the frescoed dome and the spiral staircase.

For something really different, visit the

nearby **Freedom Rides Museum** in Montgomery’s Historic Greyhound Bus Station. Montgomery’s newest museum tells the story of a major turning point in our national history. Inside, outsider artists Charlie Lucas and Joe Minter—along with more traditional artists—explore this history in intriguing artworks.

Just off I-85 south of Clanton, **Confederate Memorial Park** is a great place to stretch your legs and spend time in a great museum that tells what life was like for Confederate soldiers before, during and after the war.

In North Alabama, see why **Belle Mont** near Tusculumbia is a popular site for weddings. History and architecture fans will want to explore the tantalizing hints of a possible link to Thomas Jefferson.

Head over toward Decatur and visit **Pond Spring - The General Joe Wheeler Home**. Talk about colorful characters! The General and his daughter Annie are endlessly fascinating. Just reopened after a long restoration, the General’s house is packed with furniture, uniforms, flags and other memorabilia of this famous Civil War and Spanish American War hero.

AHC historic sites are Blue Star Museums

On July 15, AHC will post Grant Guidelines and Applications for operational grants to non-profit or public organizations for state and local historical sites and parks.

<http://preserveala.org/grantsprogram.aspx>

2012 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Commission and Council Honor Preservation Effort

In May, the Alabama Historical Commission and the Black Heritage Council presented seven awards honoring preservation successes. The awards were part of the Alabama Preservation Conference, co-sponsored by the Commission, the Council and the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation. Held in Birmingham this year, the conference attracted over 150 people.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Alabama Historical Commission



Georgia Calhoun (l) and AHC executive director Frank White

Georgia U. Calhoun Choccolocco

Her "calling" as a teacher led Georgia Calhoun into a life of preserving the history, culture and rural simplicity of Choccolocco in Calhoun County. Most of the historic buildings there are still used, even those dating back to the earliest settlers in the mid-19th century.

As the saying goes, "There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in." For so many people in

Calhoun County, the person who showed them a future that valued community history and historic places was Georgia Calhoun.

Idella Childs Distinguished Service Award

Black Heritage Council



Binford Harrison Conley

Dr. Binford Harrison Conley Huntsville

The council posthumously honored Dr. Conley for his efforts to preserve African American archival records. An early member of the Black Heritage Council, he served on the board from 1992-1994. After he became ill in 1995, his wife, Mrs. Olye Conley, served out his term.

Dr. Conley was the founding director of the State Black Archives, Research Center and Museum. Located on the Alabama A&M campus, it opened in 1990. Conley sought to raise awareness of African American contributions and to help people understand racial and cultural differences.

Distinguished Service Awards

Alabama Historical Commission

Lisa Lenz

Lawrence County

A long-time history buff, Lisa Lenz stepped up to be the guardian angel for a rare, brick slave quarter in Lawrence County. The two-room house is the last remaining building of Boxwood Plantation. The Lawrence County Industrial Board was about to bulldoze it when they learned how important the tiny brick building was.

But there it sat until Ms. Lenz offered to restore it. She carefully peeled away modern additions. And she got help with heavier work. Inside she set up a mini-museum to tell the story of this early plantation. Lenz is an example of what one dedicated person can do with no money but lots of sheer determination.

Daniel J. Meador Charlottesville, Virginia

Old Cahawba, the site of Alabama's first state capital, is getting a new future thanks to one man's personal commitment. Daniel J. Meador has a goal of getting the entire original town plat into state hands. To that end he created the Cahaba Foundation. Through his leadership, the private group has raised over \$700,000. Last fall they gave the Alabama Historical Commission deeds to 10 parcels of land. The 27 acres included scenic river-front property and land in the archaeologically-rich town center. Now 85 and legally blind, the former law school dean plans to raise another \$1.3 million to secure the rest of the town site.



Dan Meador (r) and AHC executive director Frank White

Lincoln Cemetery Rehabilitation Authority Montgomery

The Lincoln Cemetery Rehabilitation Authority provides a model for reviving abandoned or neglected cemeteries. Begun in 1906 as a cemetery for African Americans, Lincoln Cemetery was a source of pride. But a century later, vandalism and neglect resulted in open graves, litter and weeds.

In 2010 the City of Montgomery created the Lincoln Cemetery Rehabilitation Authority. It was the first of its kind set up under a 2007 state law. This law gives cities and counties the power to create authorities to document and maintain neglected cemeteries. Through a series of cleanup efforts, the new authority turned an overgrown eyesore into a well-kept and serene landscape.

Stillman House Restoration Committee

Tuscaloosa



This committee returned a Tuscaloosa icon to its original appearance and community use. The one-story, frame cottage is the oldest building associated with Stillman College. Established in 1881, Stillman provided training for African American Presbyterian ministers. It is one of Tuscaloosa's oldest institutions.

The restoration was a big task, given the shape the building was in. But the 10 member committee persevered and raised \$200,000. Five years later, Tuscaloosa has a new historic setting for tours, student orientation and community meetings.

Valley Historic Preservation Commission

Valley

This east Alabama community is composed of four mill villages. The death of the textile industry could have meant the abandonment and demolition of a rich heritage in Valley. But, after losing some buildings when the mills closed, the city formed the Valley Historic Preservation Commission.

This dynamic group has built a portfolio of preservation successes and has a regional reputation as a city which builds a future on the foundation of their past. They began by showing that windows in a historic school could be rehabilitated AND be energy efficient. This first success still stands as a model for other Alabama communities.

PLACES IN PERIL 2012

Statewide Places in Peril

Black Primitive Baptist Educational Institutions

The Thomaston Colored Institute in Marengo County, the Tennessee Valley Primitive Baptist Institute in Lawrence County, and the Boguechitto Institute in Dallas County tell an important story about one denomination's role in providing schools for rural African American students. When state-funded educational opportunities became more widely available in the mid-20th century, these magnificent buildings lost their students.

Cotton Gins Thematic

Cotton was Alabama's principal economic engine before the Civil War and well into the twentieth century. The cotton gin was the economic—and sometimes social—hub of many rural communities. Technological changes and the consolidation of gin facilities in the cotton industry made most gins obsolete.

Lustron Houses Thematic

Produced in 1949-1950 by the Lustron Corporation of Illinois, these prefabricated steel-framed houses were affordable, and virtually maintenance free. Built-in features included a unique combination sink-dish-washer-washing machine. Demolition, neglect, and unsympathetic changes have taken their toll on these uniquely mid-20th century homes. Of the 20 houses erected in Alabama, fewer than 12 survive.

Individual Places in Peril

First Missionary Baptist Church, Hayneville

First Missionary Baptist Church in Hayneville played important roles in the 1960s' voting rights struggle in Lowndes County. It hosted community meetings and voter registration activities. The Lowndes County Freedom Party, created as an alternative to the Democratic Party, held its convention in the church. There in 1966, about 900 newly registered black voters cast their ballots for a slate of African American candidates. Now, the dwindling congregation has insufficient funds for maintenance.

Fort Henderson/Trinity High School, Athens

Constructed in 1863, Fort Henderson served the Union Army's United States Colored Troops. After the war, the American Missionary Association built Trinity School nearby to educate the children of former slaves. Trinity became Alabama's first accredited high school for African Americans. For many years, it was Limestone County's only black high school. Only the 1929 auditorium, a section of the building that replaced the original school in 1959, and a portion of the fort's earthworks survive.

Learn more at <http://www.alabama-trust.info/pdf/2012/PlacesInPerilWeb2012UpDated6-5.pdf>



Moore-Webb Cotton Gin, Perry County. Credit: Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

Howell School, Dothan

Dothan's Howell School is a significant community and architectural landmark. This 1902 masonry school is an eclectic mix of arched windows, dentil cornices, and ornate classical-styled columns. The city's main grammar school until 1942, the building later



Howell School, Houston County. Credit: Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

reopened as a pajama manufacturing company. Funding has yet to materialize to convert the structure into low-income senior housing.

Lakewood, Livingston

Lakewood is a c.1840 raised cottage. Its location on ten acres of prime real estate in the city center makes it a target for potentially non-historic uses. New England craftsmen infused Federal and Greek Revival details into this regional house-type. Noted Alabama educator Julia Tutwiler lived here when she served as president of Livingston Female Institute.

One Wood Place, Tuscaloosa

This elegant and sturdy two-story brick and reinforced concrete home is one of the few buildings in the Wood Manor neighborhood that stood up to the devastating 2011 tornado. Designed by noted architect Don Buel Schuyler, the 1947 home is close to the University of Alabama, making it a target location for student and multi-family housing.

Remington Hall, Anniston

Remington Hall is a landmark Spanish Revival-style building at Fort McClellan in Anniston. Constructed

in 1936 as the Officers Club, it features seventeen World War II murals painted by German and Italian prisoners. With scenes of everyday life in the artists' native countries, these murals offer a rare glimpse into 1940s European culture. Although protected by a preservation agreement, the murals need expensive climate control to keep them from deteriorating. The building is on the market and needs an art-loving new owner.

Old Masonic Lodge, Crawford

Constructed in 1848, the lodge is one of seven pre-Civil War fraternal halls surviving in Alabama. It is the most notable structure remaining from the antebellum era when Crawford was the county seat. The lodge has served the community as a meeting hall, school and church. Today it is vacant.

Steele-Armistead-McCrary House, Tuscumbia, Colbert County

This early Alabama house falls into the "too important to lose" category. The c.1830 raised cottage is located across from the county courthouse. With its ground-level family and service rooms beneath a more formal, high-ceilinged main floor, the cottage is a type often associated with coastal Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Delicate Federal-style mantelpieces and woodwork still enrich the interior. The prime location and the possibility of preservation tax credits should tempt a new owner to give this architectural landmark a new life.



Steele-Armistead-McCrary House, Colbert County. Credit: Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

SUMMER FUN AT HISTORIC SITES

Spend Time in Alabama History Calendar

Alabama State Capitol, Montgomery
Monday - Saturday, 9am - 4pm. Group tours by appointment

Belle Mont, near Tusculmbia
Open for tours Thursday - Saturday, 9am - 4pm and Sunday 1pm - 5pm

Confederate Memorial Park, Marbury
Daily 6 am - dusk; museum daily 9am - 5pm

Fendall Hall, Eufaula
Monday - Friday and the first Saturday of each month 10am - 4pm (closed for lunch)



Part of Fendall Hall's silver collection. Credit: Alabama Tourism Department

Fort Mims, Tensaw, Baldwin County
August 25 & 26, 199th anniversary of the battle at Fort Mims. Enjoy 'old-time' music, period crafts including pottery, blacksmithing, spinning, quilting and more.

Fort Morgan, Gulf Shores
Fourth of July historic military style! Uniformed interpreters from periods of the fort's history will salute America's Independence with artillery firing, special tours, and demonstrations.

Saturday, August 4, Experience the reenactment commemorating the Battle of Mobile Bay and Siege of Fort Morgan.



Tuesday evenings in June and July, Twilight Tours of Fort Morgan in 1862.

Fort Toulouse/Fort Jackson, Wetumpka
Daily dawn - dusk; visitor center 8am - 5pm (closed for lunch)

Freedom Rides Museum, Historic Greyhound Bus Station, Montgomery
Fridays and Saturdays, 12pm - 4pm. Groups by appointment.

Gaineswood, Demopolis
Open for tours Tuesday - Friday 10am - 4pm; first Saturday of each month 10am - 2pm

Magnolia Grove, Greensboro
Open for tours Tuesday - Friday 10am - 4pm; first Saturday each month 10am - 2pm. Sunday grounds only 1pm to 4pm

Old Cahawba Archaeological Park, Orville, Dallas County

Beginning August 1, newly donated bicycles will be available to explore the natural surroundings and ruins of Alabama's first capital.



Pond Spring-The General Joe Wheeler Home, Hillsboro

See the stunning transformation of the Wheeler House after a ten-year restoration. Open for tours Wednesday - Saturday, 9am - 4pm and Sunday, 1pm - 5pm. Tours on the hour except noon; last tour starts an hour before closing time.

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ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Preserve, Protect, and Interpret Alabama's Historic Places

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