

Places in Peril



credit: David Schneider

Auburn Train Depot

120 Mitcham Avenue, Auburn

A central hub of life at Auburn University for more than one hundred years, the Auburn Train Depot welcomed most students as they first arrived at the university. The building and its surroundings were often the first glimpse new students had of "The Loveliest Village on The Plains."

The station was built around 1904, and was the third depot in Auburn since the rails arrived in 1847 (the other two burned). Designed by Auburn architecture student Ralph Dudley, the building is typical of Victorian railroad architecture of its time. The depot's design is best described as Richardsonian Romanesque. After more than 60 years of use, the station sold its last passenger ticket in 1970.

Vacant since 2003, the building has suffered from deferred maintenance, a leaking roof, and possible environmental problems from an adjacent gasoline station. These and other issues have coupled with the economic downturn to thwart a successful sale by the owner to one of several potential purchasers. In the meantime, the depot sits vacant, susceptible to the elements and vandals.



credit: David Schneider

Bankhead-Shackelford House

2825 Jefferson Street, Courtland

An architectural landmark in the Courtland National Register District, this house was the most significant residence in this planter community during the post-Reconstruction era. The home was built between the prosperous antebellum years and the renewal of cotton prosperity that occurred between 1900 and the beginning of the First World War.

Mrs. Elizabeth Bankhead built the home to resemble her 1830s plantation home, Bonnie Doone. The home is Victorian in its trim and woodwork, with pocket doors, golden oak mantelpieces, and a handsome stairway. The house has older forms and layouts that linger underneath decorative detail that changed with the tide of fashion. Today, the house speaks to the architectural conservatism of Alabama's nineteenth century agrarian gentry.

The house has been unoccupied for years and its condition has reached a critical stage. The present owner, who grew up in the house, hopes to see it restored one day. Meanwhile, a thoughtful restoration of the house would not only preserve this important piece of Alabama's architecture, but it could also serve as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization.



credit: David Schneider

Bankhead House

Bankhead Street, Sulligent

The Bankhead House is the only structure in Lamar County listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and was the home of one of Alabama's most prominent families, the Bankheads. Sometimes known as Forest Home, the house was built by John Greer Bankhead in the 1850s. The two-story, wood framed house was the birthplace of John Hollis Bankhead, one of Alabama's most influential U.S. representatives.

Also born in the home were his sons, John Hollis Bankhead II, and William B. Bankhead. Like their father, both sons were elected to the U.S. Congress. John Hollis Bankhead II served in the Senate, and William B. Bankhead served in the House and was elected Speaker of the House in 1936. The Bankheads worked to expand the federal government's power and supported President Roosevelt's New Deal Legislation.

The home is threatened by deferred maintenance and vandalism. The property owners desire to retain the land that has been in their family, yet have no use for the house. A creative solution undoubtedly exists that would resolve the dilemma, but to date no plan has been developed.



credit: David Schneider

Coosa County Farmer's and Civic Association

East Washington Street, Rockford

Built in 1940, the Coosa County Farmer's and Civic Association building is the only structure in Alabama built to house a Black County Extension Agent and the Black Home Demonstration Agent. Created by the 1914 Smith-Lever Act, the Agricultural Extension Service fostered partnerships between universities and county agents to teach new agricultural methods to rural farmers. The service helped farmers use their land more productively, increase yields and improve their standard of living. Supported by Tuskegee Institute, Alabama had a more developed black extension system than most southern states. In the segregated South, the Extension Service required separate facilities where African-American farmers could attend educational demonstrations given by agents.

The Coosa County Farmer's and Civic Association building was also the center of community, civic, and social gatherings for African Americans in Rockford prior to integration. Used by various organizations for forty years, it is an important cultural landmark in the Rockford community.

This building is endangered by deterioration and a lack of an effective plan for its rehabilitation and future use



credit: David Schneider

Cricket Theatre

113 W. Main Street, Collinsville

“It’s a Wonderful Life,” “The Big Sleep,” and “The Best Years of Our Life” were among the top movies of 1946, the same year the Cricket Theatre opened. In 1946 more than 80 million people attended the movies every week – almost 60 percent of the total population. The \$60,000, 800-seat theatre was built just as television was emerging in the decade following World War II.

Boasting the largest chairs, modern rest rooms, and air conditioning, the building is typical of the streamlined designs of the movie palace era. Throughout its heyday, the Cricket welcomed crowds who often considered the air conditioning as much of an attraction as the western that was playing. Local theatres were central to the social and entertainment life of most small towns during this time. It was also a time when African-Americans had to use side entrances to segregated balcony seats, or attend a separate theatre altogether.

The Cricket eventually succumbed to the competition from television and closed its doors in October, 1964. The Collinsville Historical Association recently purchased the building, and they are trying to raise \$90,000 to repair the collapsed roof. Only time will tell if the old Cricket marquee will once again blaze with lights and bring back some of its former excitement to Collinsville’s main street.



credit: David Schneider

Kelly-Stone-Hill House

201 Phoenix Avenue, Carrollton

The Kelly-Stone-Hill House is one of the few pre-Civil War structures remaining in Pickens County and one of the first dwellings built in Carrollton. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the house is a good example of a vernacular Greek Revival cottage, a style once prevalent in the Deep South during the 19th century.

Built for Isham and Elizabeth Kelly during the late 1830s or 1840s, the house was the childhood home of John Herbert Kelly, a Confederate General who died at the Battle of Franklin in 1864. General Kelly’s daughter, Eliza, and her husband, Lewis Stone, then became owners. Lewis Stone was a Harvard Law School graduate who served in the Alabama Legislature during the 1850s and at the state’s constitutional conventions in 1861 and 1875. He was elected to his final term in 1888.

Eliza Kelly Stone lived in the house until her death in 1909. The Hill family then purchased it and has owned it for almost a century. Today, the house is threatened by deterioration, including major problems with the roof. Although funds are limited to make the repairs, the current owners are determined to preserve their local landmark.



credit: Henry Darnell

Magee Farm

6222 Highway 45, Mobile County

A journey that began for many Alabamians on January 11, 1861 concluded at Magee Farm on April 29, 1865. At this farm, Confederate General Richard Taylor and Union General Edward Canby agreed to a cease fire and negotiated the terms of surrender for 47,000 Confederate troops serving in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

Located north of Mobile in the community of Kushla, this 1848 Creole cottage type farmhouse built by Jacob Magee is one of three major sites associated with the surrender of the Confederate army. Listed in the National Register, the farm is the only surrender site that retains its original building, in unreconstructed form with many of the original furnishings.

Despite the efforts of the Civil War Preservation Trust in 2004, operation of the site as a museum was discontinued in 2010 due to a lack of public support and declining revenues. The property was then listed for sale. It is unlikely that Magee Farm will reopen to the public, or that the significant collection of furnishings will remain with the property.

Magee Farm illustrates the difficulties faced by many historic house museums around the country in the wake of the economic downturn. However, the Kushla community still has a rare opportunity to keep this nationally significant piece of Alabama history in the public realm.



credit: Pam Smith, Alabama Tourism Department

Old Federal Road

Russell, Macon, Montgomery, Lowndes, Butler, Monroe, Conecuh, Escambia, Baldwin, and Mobile counties

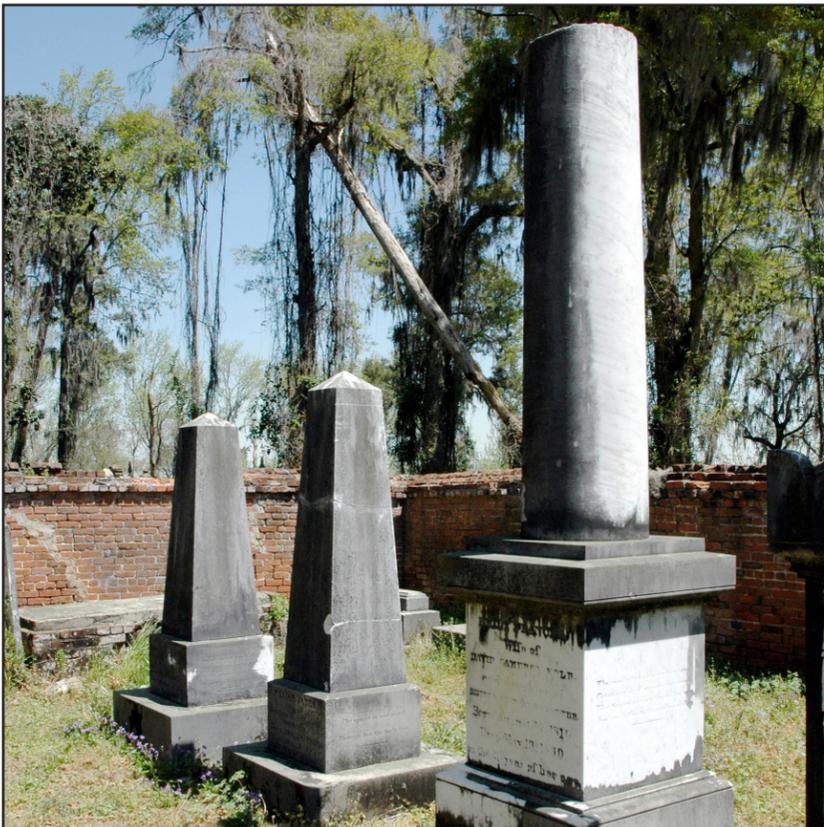
Believing a road between Washington, D.C. and New Orleans to be an “indispensable necessity,” President Thomas Jefferson secured transportation rights to a horse path from the Creek Nation in 1805. What began as a narrow horse path in 1806 soon became the transportation route for thousands of settlers moving to the Mississippi and Louisiana territories.

The 1783 Treaty of Paris and the 1803 Louisiana Purchase expanded the road’s reach. After these agreements, the federal government moved quickly to create a viable transportation network. In 1807 the government extended the road from St. Stephens to the territorial capital at Natchez. The road reduced travel time from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans by

almost ten days—a significant improvement.

Major historic elements of the road, often along with their associated settings, survive in varying states of preservation. These resources are threatened by a general lack of public awareness and appreciation. Incomplete documentation also makes it difficult for the road to be adequately recognized, protected, or included in community and infrastructure planning efforts.

In 2007, the Legislature formed the Old Federal Road Task Force to raise awareness of the road through the development of a web site, a visitors brochure, and historic signs to mark the road’s path.



credit: David Schneider

Shorter Cemetery

Riverside Drive, Eufaula

On a high bluff overlooking Lake Eufaula, the Shorter Cemetery is the burial place of the prominent Shorter family of Barbour County. The cemetery, situated on five acres in the middle of downtown Eufaula, is sheltered by moss-draped limbs of tall oak trees and is partially enclosed by a brick wall and wrought iron fence. Burial sites are marked by soaring obelisks and graceful statuary, making it a romantic and lovely spot in the city.

John Gill Shorter was the state’s first Civil War governor. He rose to political prominence during the 1850s, when he emerged as a fierce defender of slavery and an advocate of economic development and diversification. He and his family are buried in the Shorter cemetery, which also includes a separate slave/servant cemetery nearby.

Located near the Shorter home (which burned circa 1885), the cemetery is threatened by both vandals and deterioration. There is an urgent need to repair tombstones, statuary, brick walls, and wrought iron fencing. An active cemetery group is working to preserve this important local landmark and make the necessary repairs. Additionally, the AHC is currently reviewing a nomination for the cemetery to be listed on the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register.



Tremont School, Selma. © 2010 Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

Historic Wood Windows

statewide

The windows of an old building often reflect the heart of its historic character. One of the core tenets of historic preservation is that windows are essential features that must be retained and repaired. Unfortunately, historic windows are under attack. Marketing by window manufacturers, the home remodeling industry, home improvement retailers and popular magazines have convinced many that historic wood windows are obsolete and must be replaced for energy conservation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Studies show that retaining and repairing historic wood windows is not only more cost-effective, but is also the greenest approach.

An analysis in *Old House Journal* (October 2007) noted that a properly repaired historic window that can last for more than a century. Despite evidence that supports repairing historic wood windows, recently enacted federal tax incentives for energy efficiency largely favor replacement over repair.

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, “Historic windows are disappearing at an alarming rate, and we in the preservation movement have had enough with the onslaught of misinformation about window replacement!” Those of us in Alabama who care about our historic places need to raise our voices in unison.



The 1852 duck cotton mill in Tallassee is part of the Tallassee Mills complex that was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 26, 2010.

Cotton Mills statewide

These multi-storied brick buildings are a reminder of a time when Alabama's fortunes were tied to cotton. Although a few cotton mills operated in the state before the Civil War, the industry boomed in the 1880s when northern dollars capitalized cotton mills in northern Alabama. In southern Alabama, local investors funded the mills. By 1929, Alabama's 83 textile mills employed 28,000 people. Following World War II, the textile industry provided jobs for one in five Alabamians. Alabama's textile industry ended during the 1990s, when a combination of cheap overseas labor and obsolete machinery shifted mill operations outside of the U.S.

The jobs may have left, but the cotton mills remain. Utilitarian structures that can be used once again, cotton mills are well built, with open interior spaces, high ceilings and tall windows. While there are good examples of creative adaptations of cotton mills in our state, too many of these buildings are under utilized or deteriorating from neglect. As small towns across the state try to attract investment to their downtowns by creating mixed-use developments, we urge city and business leaders to consider the potential of cotton mills. These buildings can be converted into housing, office space, laboratory space, retail shops, arts centers, performance venues and restaurants.

PLACES IN PERIL SAVED

One of the impacts of the Places in Peril program is an increased awareness of historic places. With this increased awareness, people begin to view these places as assets in their communities. As awareness yields commitment, and commitment yields action, these endangered properties can be saved and returned to their place as treasured landmarks. The program has helped to save many important landmarks that may otherwise have been lost.

This year we highlight the GM & O Station in Mobile and the Drish House in Tuscaloosa.



credit: City of Mobile

GM & O Station (listed 1996) 110 Beauregard Street, Mobile

A magnificent building in its day, the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad Terminal was built as a gateway to Mobile. Later, it fell into disrepair and was abandoned. But thanks to a partnership between the City of Mobile and Carbone properties, the GM & O building is once again a magnificent structure that houses the city's Wave Transit System and other offices.

Architect P. Thorton Mayre designed this Mission Revival-style station in 1907, which was used for passenger service until the late 1950s. In 1975 it was listed in the National Register, but by that time damaging alterations had compromised the once spectacular interior spaces. The monumental domed waiting area was filled in with steel and concrete partitions, and the dome was concealed when the ceilings were lowered. Changes also included the removal of a portion of the train shed. The building was soon abandoned in the mid 1980s.

In 2001 the City of Mobile and Carbone Properties invested more than \$18 million to restore this significant landmark. Also, the developer received federal historic preservation tax credits which made it possible to restore the building to its former grandeur. The domed space can be appreciated once again.



Drish House (listed 2006) 2300 17th Street, Tuscaloosa

Constructed in the 1830s, the Drish House was transformed in 1862 into an architectural landmark that embodies both the Greek Revival and Italianate Villa styles.

Once part of a 450-acre plantation, the house has been used in various ways by several owners. The Drish family sold the property in the late 19th century and the house became the focal point of Tuscaloosa's first suburban expansion. The house later took on a new life as the Jemison School in 1906 until it was leased to the Tuscaloosa Wrecking Company. In 1940, the city school board sold the building to the Southside Baptist Church. When the church considered demolishing the house in 1994, the Heritage Commission of Tuscaloosa County convinced the congregation to save the structure, which had fallen into disrepair. The commission and the Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society helped to re-roof, paint and mothball the building in order to give it another chance.

The Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society now owns the house and has stabilized it and removed the latter additions. The group is raising money for restoration and wants to eventually use the house for private events to support the house and society.