

Alabama's Most Endangered Sites for 2011

Alabama Historical Commission
Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

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Avondale Mill Village in Sylacauga named as a *Place in Peril*

In observance of National Historic Preservation Month, the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) and the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation (ATHP) announce Alabama's most endangered places for 2011.

Since 1994, the AHC and the ATHP have joined forces to sponsor *Places in Peril*, a program designed to highlight some of Alabama's most significant endangered historic sites.

"Places in Peril is a valuable tool in directing public attention to the many historic places in Alabama that are under threat from neglect or demolition," said Frank White, executive director of the AHC.

David Schneider, executive director of the ATHP states, "This list reminds us that much remains to be done to help Alabamians recognize that our historic places are essential community assets. These places represent one of the greenest approaches to providing places in which to live and work."

Avondale Mill Village (c. 1910s)

Associated with one of Alabama's most significant early 20th century textile operations, Avondale Mill Village in Sylacauga is now representative of the demise of this once great industry.

Founded in 1897, Avondale Mills chose successful businessman Braxton Bragg Comer to be its president. The company flourished under Comer's leadership and continued to expand after Comer was elected Governor of Alabama in 1906 and his son James McDonald (Donald) Comer assumed management. Avondale began building the first of its three mills in Sylacauga in 1913. The company provided amenities like libraries, swimming pools, hospitals, and other recreational facilities for its workers. The three Sylacauga plants closed in 2006.

Typical of similar villages found throughout Alabama, the neighborhood also known as Mignon provided affordable housing for the mill's "operatives" in close proximity to their work. The village fostered a strong sense of community among the residents. Today, former mill workers and their families recall the village as an excellent place to raise a family.

Located outside of the city's limits, the village has suffered from economic decline and disinvestment and struggles to remain a viable neighborhood. While there is an effort to improve conditions, broad-based community support and action are needed to address the many issues facing the village.



credit: David Schneider

Avondale Mill Village

2011 Places in Peril

- **Avondale Mill Village**, Sylacauga, Talladega County
- **Bermuda Hill**, Gallion Creek, Hale County
- **Boiling Springs Native American Sites**, Choccolocco Creek, Calhoun County
- **Downtown Anniston Historic District**, Anniston, Calhoun County
- **Elizabeth Presbyterian Church**, Sumter County
- **Gurley Town Hall**, Gurley, Madison County
- **Historic Movie Theatres**, statewide
- **Jemison-Turner House**, Turner, Talladega County
- **Powell School**, Birmingham, Jefferson County
- **Windham Construction Company Office Building**, Birmingham, Jefferson County

The Places in Peril list carries no formal protection, but it does build awareness in local communities about endangered sites, and can help generate support to preserve these places.

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