

Alabama's Most Endangered Sites for 2011

Alabama Historical Commission
Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

Contact: David Schneider, 256.310.6320
dbschneider@bellsouth.net



May 25, 2011

Historic Movie Theatres named to *Places 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."

Historic Movie Theatres, statewide

In a day and time when most of us are familiar with 50-inch flat screen televisions, home entertainment systems, and the ability to stream movies into our living rooms, the days when Americans went to the movies more than once a week seem very distant.

Few people today can remember the golden age of the motion picture palace, when audiences watched silent movies accompanied by full orchestras or grand pipe organs. Some people may remember the 1930s and 1940s, when going to the movies was the national pastime.

However, America's habit of going to the movies began to wane as television made its inroads in the 1950s. By the 1960s, many of the grand movie palaces had already succumbed to the wrecking ball. By the 1970s and 1980s, the vast majority of Alabama's historic theatres had gone dark.

Few building types hold such broad appeal within their communities. People fondly remember Saturday matinees, first dates, and all the fun they had at theatres. As a result, many cities have found creative ways to save and repurpose their historic theatres. Birmingham's Alabama Theatre (1927) has been restored as a performing arts center. Similar conversions have occurred in Mobile, Decatur, Montgomery, Talladega, Tuscaloosa, Winfield and other cities. Yet there are many more theatres that are awaiting restoration and an audience. We can still smell the popcorn!



Pastime Theatre, Winfield

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.

###