

Alabama's Most Endangered Sites for 2011

Alabama Historical Commission
Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

Contact: David Schneider, 256.310.6320
dbschneider@bellsouth.net



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Powell School in Birmingham 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."

Powell School (1888)

Seeking to attract new residents, Birmingham founder and Elyton Land Company president Colonel James R. Powell donated four blocks in 1873 to build Powell School, the city's first public school. The initial building was replaced in 1888 by the current structure. For over a century, thousands attended Powell School, also known as the "Free School."

The three-story red brick structure has a stone foundation and represents the Victorian Gothic style. The façade has three primary bays, which are divided into three bays separated vertically by pilasters and horizontally by brick courses.

Vacant since 2003, the school symbolizes the city's early business leaders' commitment to education. A January 2011 fire destroyed the roof and most of the interior, leaving the building's future in doubt. Community leaders contend that the historic building can be restored and reused. The City of Birmingham is waiting on an independent structural assessment before determining if the building should be demolished.

More than a century ago, Colonel Powell described Birmingham as "The Magic City." Currently, political, business, and civic leaders are working to create a little magic so Birmingham can retain this important piece of its history. City Councilman Johnathan Austin commented, "We've really got to do our very best to save Powell."



credit: David Schneider

Powell School

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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