

PRESERVATION Alabama Historical Commission REPORT

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SENATORS SHELBY AND SESSIONS SUPPORT PRESERVATION Funding for Cahawba, Fort Morgan, and Magnolia Grove

In the 2009 congressional appropriations bills, U.S. Senators Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) and Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) included \$800,000 to support heritage-tourism based economic development in Alabama.

According to Frank White, Executive Director of the AHC, "Senator Shelby helped us to secure \$650,000 for construction of the new visitor center at Cahawba and essential repairs at Magnolia Grove.

"Senator Sessions sponsored \$150,000 for an interpretive trail at Fort Morgan. These much needed funds will make these state-owned landmarks more accessible, attractive and educational for visitors," said White.

"Investment in West Alabama's

tourism industry will help spur economic growth and development throughout the Black Belt," said Senator Shelby. "Additionally, I believe that we should protect and preserve this historically significant site so that future generations can enjoy the facility."

Included in the bill was \$300,000 for constructing the Old Cahawba Visitors Center. A July 2005 fire destroyed an earlier center.

Cahawba, the site of Alabama's frontier capital, lies at the intersection of four major, new heritage tourism initiatives: the Black Belt Nature and Heritage Trail, the Black Belt Heritage Area, the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights Trail and the Cahaba River Canoe Trail.

It also serves as a popular outdoor classroom in one of the nation's most distressed regions and as a popular regional recreation site for low and moderate-income families. It provides trails that help with fitness and health, public access to the river for fishing and exposure to nature. The visitor center will provide essential restroom facilities and other amenities that make these opportunities more accessible and enjoyable.

Located just 12 miles west of Selma, more than 27,000 people visit Old Cahawba every year. State, local, and private dollars will match the federal funding.

Also part of the funding is a \$350,000 allotment for Magnolia Grove in Greensboro. The historic house was constructed around 1840 by Colonel Isaac Croom, but is most noted for its association with Spanish American War hero and U.S. Congressman Richmond Pearson Hobson. In addition to Hobson's military fame, he was a Progressive-era politician who championed women's rights and civil rights.

The funding will pay for structural improvements to the main house; interior restoration and interpretation of the slave house and kitchen building; improvement to the existing drive and parking area; improvements to the exterior lighting; and the addition of a restroom and storage.

"Magnolia Grove is an important part of our state's history," said

Shelby. "I am pleased that the Alabama Historical Commission will use this funding to protect and preserve it for future generations."

The \$150,000 appropriation to Fort Morgan will fund the reconstruction of sections of the August 1864 Union siege lines. This will allow for a better understanding of the Union presence in the siege. The money will also purchase appropriate reproduction artillery pieces for the siege batteries. The Baldwin County Commission is managing the grant.

Currently the fort clearly delineates where the Confederates were, but there is nothing outside the fort that gives any indication to visitors of where the Union Soldiers were positioned.

Senator Sessions comments, "I applaud the Alabama Historical Commission and all those that have invested personal time and energy to restore Fort Morgan. The fort represents an important part of Alabama history, and the funding for the interpretive trail project will help ensure those that visit the fort will leave with a greater understanding of the important events that took place there."



Magnolia Grove in Greensboro. For more tour information, call 334-264-8618.



ALABAMA'S PLACES IN PERIL

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. This year's list includes 10 sites.

"Places in Peril is a valuable tool in directing public attention to the many cultural resources in Alabama under threat from neglect or demolition," said Frank White, executive director of the Alabama Historical Commission.

GROVE COURT APARTMENTS Montgomery

Constructed in 1947 by local architect Clyde Pearson, Grove Court stands out in the capitol city as a rare example of the International Style. Its long rectilinear form, taut plane surfaces devoid of ornamentation, brick and concrete construction,

flat roof, cantilever balconies, corner windows and bands of metal casement windows are hallmarks of the style. Despite the high level of integrity, the apartments are today in a deplorable condition. Now open to vagrants and the elements, and with a demolition notice looming from the city, the future of Grove Court is very much in peril. The current owners now have it on the market. With new ownership and a new renovation plan, this "recent past" landmark in Montgomery may ultimately be saved.

THE LYRIC THEATRE Birmingham

When it was constructed in 1914, the Lyric Theatre was the largest theatre in Birmingham. Vaudeville stars Buster Keaton, Sophie Tucker, Will Rodgers, Mae West and the Marx

brothers performed here. After closing in 1958, the Lyric suffered from years of neglect. Although the city of Birmingham provided a grant in 2004, substantial funding is still needed for restoration.

The Lyric is the oldest surviving theater in the city. The theatre and office building were constructed

in 1913 by Jake Wells of the Wells Amusement Company, with New York architect C.K. Howell responsible for the design. Today, the dedicated owners of the Lyric are looking for funds to develop it into a fine arts theatre. The owners recognize the significance of the Lyric and are determined to see it preserved.



Uniontown High School

WADLEY DEPOT

Wadley, Randolph Co.

The Atlanta, Birmingham and Atlantic depot was constructed in 1907 to serve Wadley, a community originally planned to be a "model city" in Randolph County. The developers of Wadley wanted to harness the water power along the Tallapoosa River, but their plans never led to an economic boom for the community. The Wadley depot survived and is as a rare example of Spanish Revival architecture. It displays wide overhanging eaves supported by brackets, a red tile roof, half round door and window arches, and stucco veneer.

Lack of maintenance and security has subjected the depot to deterioration and vandalism. The town of Wadley, through their Envision Wadley committee, wants to renovate the depot into a community center.

MT. PLEASANT BAPTIST CHURCH AND COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL

Hamburg, Wilcox County

The Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church and Community Day School have served the black community in Hamburg for many years. The church, constructed in 1912, and the school, constructed in 1915, look much as they did when they were constructed. Today the structures are in need of substantial restoration. When it was built, the church was the only African American Baptist congregation in the farming community of Hamburg.

The church and school have retained many original features including the siding, return cornices, wood paneling and flooring, and pot belly stove in the school. Members of the church and community are determined to save these landmarks.

ALLEN & JEMISON BUILDING

Tuscaloosa

The Allen and Jemison Building, also known as the Spiller Building, is a landmark in downtown Tuscaloosa. The large 52,000 square foot, four-story brick building was constructed in 1903 on the foundation of the old 1826 Tuscaloosa courthouse. William Jemison and his partner started what became the largest hardware store in Alabama.

The current owners do not have the funding to maintain the building, but they do not want to sell it either. The building is awaiting demolition this summer unless an alternative plan is devised by the owners.

HISTORIC SCHOOLS OF BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham

So many historic Alabama schools are abandoned, in disrepair, or will be demolished each year that in 2000, "Historic Schools – Statewide" were listed

as a "Places in Peril" thematic. The Birmingham Board of Education recently closed, or proposed to close, 28 older schools. Many are eligible for the National Register and are landmarks within their neighborhoods. Some will just be vacated for now while others are slated for demolition.

Not all schools can be saved. If possible, efforts should be made to identify the most significant ones and devise a citywide plan, to adapt the buildings for new uses.

PREWITT PLANTATION SLAVE CEMETERY

Northport vic., Tuscaloosa County

Slave cemeteries are significant, yet largely forgotten, historic resources in Alabama. Many cemetery locations are unknown, but the location of the old Prewitt Slave Cemetery near Northport has been known for generations. It is an endangered site with nature, logging, limited access and even development pressures threatening its future survival.

Plantation owner and major slave trader, John Welch Prewitt established the 2-acre burial ground in the early 19th century. The grave markings range from initials scratched into stone to full names and dates as old as 1819. Prewitt family descendants, both black and white, are determined to restore the cemetery.

UNIONTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

Uniontown

The Uniontown Historic District boasts many significant historic buildings dating from the 1830s to the early 20th century and beyond. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2000, the district embodies the rich architecture and history of Uniontown, a community located in Alabama's Black Belt. Over the years, however, many of these buildings have become vacant, deteriorated or have been demolished.

Now groups like *Uniontown Cares, Inc.*, an organization dedicated to making "their town a better place to live," are trying to save old Uniontown High School (c. 1924) and other buildings in the district. Hopefully this and other important historic structures in the city will be around for many years to come.

TOWN OF HOBSON CITY

Hobson City, Calhoun County

This year marks the 110th anniversary of the founding of Hobson City, the oldest black municipality in Alabama. Despite its historical significance, Hobson City is now struggling to survive as a separate municipality.

Before the turn-of-the-century, Hobson City was part of the city of Oxford in an area called Mooree Quarter. After a black Justice of the Peace was elected from the area, the mayor of Oxford redrew the boundaries of the city to exclude

Mooree Quarter. This area became Hobson City on July 20, 1899, with a population of 135 families. At its peak the city grew to 1,900 people due to the construction of the Calhoun County Training School in 1923, a Rosenwald school.

Two groups are now working to improve the community: the Hobson City Community and Economic Development, Inc., and the Concerned Citizens of Hobson City. Both organizations aim to revitalize the town through economic development so that it may prosper and continue to be a municipality, while preserving its history.

OGLETREE-WRIGHT-IVY HOUSE

Auburn

The Ogletree-Wright-Ivy House was constructed during the late 1840s by one of Auburn's founding fathers, James B. Ogletree. As a rare surviving antebellum Greek Revival residence, the house retains many of its original exterior and interior features. However, rental housing surrounds the property making it vulnerable to development pressures. The City of Auburn included it in its local historic district, but preservationists are still concerned that it could be in peril as it is rapidly deteriorating.

According to Robert Gamble of the AHC, the design "expresses the distinctive brand of Greek Revival architecture that flourished a decade or so before the Civil War" in Auburn and east central Alabama. Today, the house not only needs attention, but also an appreciation of its architectural and historical significance.

Two nationally significant sites have previously been listed, but are **STILL IN PERIL**.

BARTON ACADEMY, Mobile (2005)

Barton Academy is one of Alabama's finest Greek Revival buildings and one of the nation's oldest public school buildings. The Board of Education previously used the building for their central office, but it is now vacant. Local advocates suggest it could be transformed into an arts magnet school, which would be a good use for Alabama's first public school building.

OLD TALLASSEE MILL, Tallassee (1994, 2001)

The City of Tallassee, the Chamber of Commerce and the Talisi Historical Preservation Society are working together with the AHC to preserve the mill complex.

According to Charles Pollard, President of the Preservation Society, "We are looking into various alternatives that could preserve the history of the mills, and create community development opportunities for the city and surrounding areas. The future of the mills is looking more promising."

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Communities participating in the CLG program are eligible to receive Historic Preservation Fund grants. The AHC annually awards grants for local preservation projects on a competitive basis to local governments certified under the National Park Service program. Monies for the projects come from Alabama's annual appropriations from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

The grants must be matched by the applicant and can be used for surveys of historic resources, nominations to the National Register, local preservation plans, preservation education projects, and predevelopment studies.

For information, contact Mary Shell at 334-230-2691, or mary.shell@preserveala.org.

City of Fairfield \$3,000

Prepare a National Register of Historic Places nominations for Fairfield's commercial and residential historic properties.

Town of Magnolia Springs \$6,500

Complete a historic resources survey of the town limits to determine properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

City of Mobile \$2,680

Provides funding for local preservation commission and architectural review board

members to attend the Preservation Leadership Training Course offered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

City of Mobile \$10,000

Update the 1987 National Register documentation of the Leikauf Historic District.

City of Mobile \$5,000

Provide National Register documentation on the Midtown and Leikauf Historic Districts to the city web site.

City of Birmingham \$5,000

Operation New Birmingham to survey the Fountain Heights Neighborhood to determine properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

City of Birmingham \$2,000

Operation New Birmingham to survey the Birmingham Triangle Commercial District to determine properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

City of Selma \$2,650

Provides funding for local preservation commission members to attend the Preservation Leadership Training Course provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

GRANT AWARDS FY '09**City of Selma \$7,500**

Provides support for local historic preservation commission and Main Street program activities including promotional activities, implementation of market study for downtown commercial district, building inventory on Water Avenue, and the development of a historic building code draft.

City of Talladega \$2,000

Provides funding for all local historic preservation commission members to attend two trainings.

City of Talladega \$2,400

Publish copies of Silk Stocking Historic District Design Guidelines for local distribution.



St. Paul's Episcopal Church on Oak Street in Magnolia Springs, built in 1902, was listed to the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

AHC DIRECTOR BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS IN D.C.

In February, AHC Executive Director Frank White and National Trust Advisor Sam Frazier from Birmingham led a group to Capitol Hill to lobby for increased funding for historic preservation. They visited the office of each member of Alabama's congressional delegation and encouraged them to support enhanced funding for State Historic Preservation Offices.

White discussed with the delegation the revival of the Main Street Statewide Coordinating Program, the Black Belt Heritage Area, preservation tax credit projects and the historic sites operated by the AHC. The director also reviewed major outreach and educational accomplishments of the commission contained in the 2008 Annual Report.

Additionally, White asked each House member to join the Historic Preservation Caucus. Founded in 2003 by Representatives Michael Turner (R-OH) and Brad Miller (D-NC), the caucus is a bipartisan effort to bring together members of Congress who understand the value of historic places and their potential. The Caucus creates and examines legislative

proposals affecting historic preservation, and also serves as a clearinghouse for members seeking information and sharing ideas about preservation.

Current members of the Historic Preservation Caucus are:

- **Spencer Bachus** (R-6th)
- **Jo Bonner** (R-1st)
- **Artur Davis** (D-7th)
- **Rep. Parker Griffith** (D-5th)

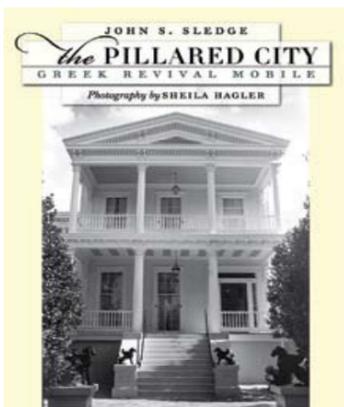
On May 7, President Obama announced the FY 2010 spending plan that recommends:

- **\$46.5 million for State Historic Preservation Offices, a \$4 million increase from FY 2009**
- **\$20 million for Save America's Treasures, level with FY 2009**
- **\$3.175 million for the Preserve America program, received no funding in FY 2009**



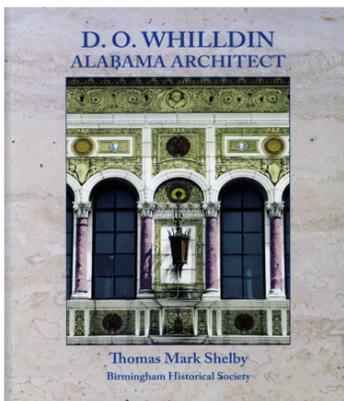
Sam Frazier with U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus

While in D.C. White attended the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO), the association of State officials who carry out the national historic preservation program as delegates of the Secretary of the Interior. At the meeting he was elected by his peers to serve on the Board of Directors for NCSHPO.



Sledge pens new book on Mobile's architecture

In *The Pillared City*, John S. Sledge offers a richly illustrated overview of the Greek Revival period in Mobile, Alabama (1825-70). Published by the University of Georgia Press, the work features sixty photographs by Sheila Hagler. "Sledge's literary skill allows him to sustain interest by treating the buildings within the human context that brought them into being—and on occasion brought them down. A hefty slice of Mobile history is served up, with buildings as the primary vehicle through which the story is told," comments Robert Gamble, AHC Senior Architectural Historian. For more information visit: www.ugapress.com.



New book celebrates Whilldin's legacy in Alabama

Author and architectural historian Thomas Mark Shelby has written a new book titled, *D.O. Whilldin: Alabama Architect*. Whilldin designed buildings in Tuscaloosa, Gadsden and Birmingham from 1904-1962. Copies are available only from the Birmingham Historical Society. Visit www.bhistorical.org to purchase.

2009 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

The AHC and the Black Heritage Council are seeking nominations for the 2009 Historic Preservation Awards. Recipients will be honored during the Alabama Preservation Conference in Auburn, October 8-10.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Since 1969, the Alabama Historical Commission has celebrated achievements in preservation by presenting the Distinguished Service Award to individuals and groups whose contributions demonstrate excellence in historic preservation.

ROY SWAYZE AWARD

This award recognizes outstanding achievement by a private owner in the restoration of a major Alabama landmark.

IDELLA CHILDS AWARD

Each year the Black Heritage Council recognizes outstanding preservation projects that highlight Alabama's African American history and culture. The late Idella Childs established an enviable record as a preservationist of Alabama's black landmarks.

Please return nominations by 5:00, JUNE 15 to:

John Greene
Alabama Historical Commission
P.O. Box 300900
Montgomery, AL 31630-0900

By courier:
468 South Perry Street
Montgomery, AL 36104

jgreene@preserveala.org (334) 230-2680

Nominee: _____

Daytime phone and e-mail: _____

Address: _____

CATEGORY: (check one)

- DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD
- ROY SWAYZE AWARD
- IDELLA CHILDS AWARD

On a separate sheet, please list name & address/location of property, or accomplishment:

DESCRIPTION: Provide on a separate sheet.

- 1) A brief statement of why the project, person or organization demonstrates excellence in historic preservation
- 2) A detailed narrative, typed, double-spaced, and no more than 3 pages that supports the statement
- 3) Two publication-quality photographs; one showing the project and one showing the person or group. Digital photos may be included on a CD or e-mailed
- 4) Three letters of support
- 5) Any additional documentation including drawings, news coverage, or publication

Nominated by: _____

Daytime phone and e-mail: _____

Address: _____

STATEWIDE REPORT

SUMMER EVENTS

Fort Morgan

251.540.5257

- July 4 - Artillery Salute to American Independence
- July 7, 14, 21, 28 - 7-8:30 Tuesday Night Candlelight Tours
- Aug. 1-2 - 145th Anniversary of the Battle of Mobile Bay & Siege

Fendall Hall

334.687.8469

- July 20-23 - Hands on History Day Camp
- August 3 - September 30 Community Art Exhibit

Gaineswood

334-289-4846

- September 26 Harvest Festival - 10-4

Magnolia Grove

334-289-4846

- September 11-12 Hwy. 14 Antiques Trail - 8-5

MUSCLE SHOALS NAMED STATE'S FIRST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The Shoals area in northwest Alabama became a National Heritage Area (NHA) with the passage of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009. The Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area includes the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, the W.C. Handy Home, Belle Mont, Pond Spring, as well as the birth-

Vulcan Park and Museum celebrates restoration

It has been five years since Vulcan was repaired and returned to the top of Birmingham's Red Mountain. In celebration of this anniversary, Vulcan Park and Museum has unveiled a new family-friendly exhibits at the Vulcan Center Museum.

The Restoration of Vulcan: A Collision of Art and Science tells the story of Vulcan's deterioration and celebrates the statue's restoration and return to Red Mountain. Visitors see the factors that contributed to Vulcan's demise and the state-of-the-art engineering that restored him to his original form. The exhibit will be on site through February 2010 and includes several hands-on interactive devices that illustrate the problems Vulcan faced, a miniature Vulcan armature, and a flash-animated Vulcan game.

place of Helen Keller. The NHA encompasses Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone and Morgan counties.

The local coordinating entity for the NHA is the Muscle Shoals Regional Center, located at the University of North Alabama. Congressman Bud Cramer originally intro-

duced legislation to create the NHA.

Also included in the Act was the authorization for an official NHA Study for the Chattahoochee Trace in Alabama and Georgia. The Historic Chattahoochee Commission (HCC) will manage the Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Area, once it is officially designated.



In April AHC Director Frank White attended Regent Cameron Freeman Napier's (center) retirement ceremony at the First White House of the Confederacy in Montgomery. Anne Henry Tidmore (right) is the new Regent.

SAVE THE DATE
Alabama Preservation Conference
Oct. 8-10, Auburn

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Frank W. White *Executive Director*
John Greene *Editor*

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 National Park Service / P. O. Box 37127 / Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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