

THE ALABAMA TRUSTEE

A publication of the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

Fall 2010

2010 ATHP Awards

Places in Peril Achievement Award

Thomas Properties, LLC
Houses of Noble Park

Restoration

Friends of Rickwood Field
Historic Rickwood Field

Rehabilitation

David Braly & Mark Montoya
Firehouse #9

Sloss Real Estate Group
Pepper Place/Martin Biscuit Co. Complex

Preservation Service

James Waters, posthumously

Gwendolyn C. Turner Lifetime Achievement Award

Ann Bedsole

Small Towns/Downtowns

City of Union Springs
Downtown Revitalization

Alexander and Chrissy Nettles
Beehive Coffee and Books

City of Montgomery
Historic Downtown Montgomery

Regions Bank
Bank of Alabama Building



The Collinsville Public Library Building - Today and in 2004 (inset)

Finding Creative Solutions

Alabama Trust Executive Director David B. Schneider snapped the above photo recently while driving through Collinsville in DeKalb County. He immediately remembered the building from a historic sites survey he had completed for the town back in 2004. "I recalled being told this was in the works back then, but was thrilled to see the completed project - a really fantastic job! Obviously the hard work of the Collinsville Historical Association is bearing fruit."

Several such projects are highlighted in this issue of *The Alabama Trustee*. There are countless other examples.

The Collinsville library project provides a good object lesson for the value of retaining and stabilizing important landmarks for which there may not be a viable current revitalization alternative. Preservationists have always noted that as long as a building is still standing, there is hope.

One important opportunity on the horizon is the prospect for full funding of the National Historic Preservation

Fund. In 1976, Congress authorized the deposit of \$150 million per year from the Outer Continental Shelf oil lease revenues into the fund. Unfortunately, the Fund has never been fully funded and, coupled with budget cuts to most state historic preservation offices, including Alabama's, money to help jump-start creative projects has been scarce.

A provision to fully fund the Historic Preservation Fund was included in the CLEAR Act was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives this summer. It is now pending before the Senate.

What would this mean for projects in Alabama - money and the possibility of a return to the type of successful brick and mortar seed grants that stimulated so much creative work in years past. How can you help? Organizations can join the Coalition for Full Funding and individuals can contact their senators. For more information, visit www.fullyfundhpf.org, or contact the Alabama Trust.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The 2010 Alabama Preservation Conference is only days away. I hope you have made your plans to join us in Montgomery. If you have not, there is still time. We want to see you and hear about the wonderful happenings in your area.

The conference as always is a great way to meet kindred spirits in the field of preservation and to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered every hour. In addition, this year's event is a celebration of Alabama's small towns and downtowns and the tremendous positive energy that occurs when economic development and preservation work hand in hand for the entire community.

Throughout this edition of the *Trustee*, you will read about the wonderful preservation efforts occurring because of people like you. On the front page is our annual awards listing. These projects and people will be recognized at the Award Ceremony on Oct. 8 in Montgomery's restored Union Station. We hope you are as impressed with these projects as we were. The 2010 awards may have already been selected, but that doesn't mean the recognition needs to stop. When you see or hear about a preservation project that you feel deserves attention, please don't hesitate to contact us either by



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Contact Tina N. Jones
(205) 652-3497
tnj@uwa.edu

phone or email.

If you have not realized it by now, we believe that historic places matter, and that preservation is contagious. We want you catch preservation fever too.

See you in Montgomery!

Tina Naremore Jones
Board President

Rushing Student Sponsorship for Preservation Studies

There are still a few spots left for students working in the preservation field. Call us today at (205) 652-3497 if you know someone who is interested in taking advantage of this wonderful opportunity!

save historic places

*Has your membership in the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation lapsed?
Have you ever supported the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation financially?*

In difficult economic times, we must seize the opportunity to promote historic places as assets for economic development and environmental sustainability.

This message is resonating with many communities.

Time is of the essence if we are to get our message across before it's too late for many irreplaceable historic places.

If you think historic places make life better, we urge you to make a contribution using the form at the end of this newsletter. We can't save these places without you!

THE ALABAMA TRUSTEE

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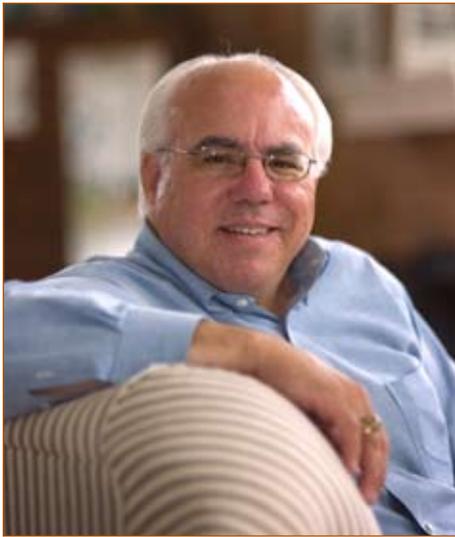
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SPEAKING OUT *Tilting at Windmills*

by David B. Schneider, Executive Director

Years ago, while I was serving another organization, I had the fortunate pleasure of working with a board president and mentor who seemed to relish, as much as I did, the good preservation fight we were waging. Day in and day out for more than a year, John Jarvis, an immigrant Scotsman and retired headmaster of the local country day school, would bound into the office, shout a quick “Hello, Nancy” to our office manager, and greet me with a whole pile of new ideas that he had thought up the night before. Off we would go in our seemingly Herculean effort to instill a preservation ethic in a community that had shown little appreciation or understanding of its architectural heritage up to that point.

We enjoyed successes and endured failures, but we gradually saw things start to change. Like soldiers in old war movies carrying the flag up some embattled hillside, we knew that we weren’t likely to get it to the top. But we were content to carry it for a while and gratified when others took the handle after we moved along. Despite his frequent comment that we were “tilting at windmills,” John believed and understood that a few dedicated folks could, by forming partnerships, magnify the efforts of others and make a real difference.

To most of us in the preservation movement, it often seems like we are tilting at windmills. A single project can throw one challenge after the next into our path. In this issue of the *Trustee*, we are highlighting great examples from the City of Tuscaloosa’s Places in Perils that have been rescued. While much work remains to be done, each is inching closer to being restored. Although the Alabama Trust and the Alabama Historical Commission raised awareness for each of these buildings through its Places in Peril program, the “heavy lifting,” in these cases was done

by others including, notably, the City of Tuscaloosa and the Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society.

Recently the Trust has had the opportunity to help in a more substantive way with preservation issues in Birmingham, Springville, and Huntsville. As an organization the Trust has limited resources, yet it was able to make a difference in supporting local efforts already underway by effectively leveraging our expertise, statewide presence, and connection to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

In Birmingham, the developer proposed a new Walgreens honored a commitment that corporation made previously to the made to the National Trust. Fire Station 22 will be preserved, and plans are underway to move an established restaurant, which would have otherwise been displaced by the project, into the rehabilitated landmark.

In Springville, an eleventh-hour appeal from the city’s preservation commission allowed the Trust to make a quick site visit to negotiate with interested parties and petition the commission to delay demolition of two significant, but deteriorated landmark commercial buildings. The Springville City Council recently voted to accept a donation of the buildings and plans to stabilize and re-sell them.

A similar appeal from Historic Huntsville Foundation brought the Trust in to make a successful presentation to the community’s historic preservation commission, resulting in the denial of a demolition request for a contributing house within the Twickenham Historic District. In Huntsville, someone made the comment that “the Alabama Trust made a difference in MY neighborhood.” After all, that’s what the Alabama Trust is really all about: supporting local efforts in any way that we can to save historic places. We aren’t just tilting at windmills after all!

Contact David Schneider
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What’s on your mind?

Send your opinions on preservation issues to Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation, Station 45, Livingston, Alabama 35470 or e-mail us at alabamatrust@uwa.edu.

Please include your name, address, phone, and e-mail.

The Trust wishes to thank its 2010 conference supporters:

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2010 Alabama Preservation Conference
Preserving Alabama’s Hometowns
Embracing Historic Places – Making Life Better

October 7-9, 2010 • Montgomery, Alabama
Keynote Speaker: Donovan Rypkema

PRESERVATION IN THE FIELD

Since the last edition of *The Alabama Trustee*, the Trust's executive director has continued to actively support historic preservation initiatives throughout the state. From June through August, David Schneider has been involved in preservation activities in 18 communities in 15 counties as well as participating in three statewide issues. The running tally since starting work as a Statewide Partner in the Field with the National Trust for Historic Preservation includes: 101 ac-



Former Greyhound Bus Station
Anniston, Calhoun County

tivities, 39 counties, 56 communities and 6 statewide issues.

Among the highlights for this period:

- Thomaston Colored Institute, Thomaston, Marengo County, managing stabilization work funded by a communications tower mitigation;
- Union Springs, Bullock County, site visit to provide technical assistance;
- Freedom Rides Trail, Anniston, Calhoun County, participating in planning directed by the Spirit of Anniston;
- AHC Sunset Committee, attended Sunset Committee hearing in support of the Alabama Historical Commission;
- National Register Property Tax Assessments, statewide, ATHP worked with Calhoun County assessor's office to clarify rules for qualifying historic commer-



- cial properties for lower property tax rates;
- Coalition for Full Funding, national, ATHP coordinated efforts by people in the state to support full funding for the Historic Preservation Fund assessment; and
- Westwood, Uniontown, Perry County, site visit.

Other items are featured elsewhere in this newsletter.

IN MEMORIAM

Cecil Whitmire, who led the transformation of Birmingham's Alabama Theatre from a struggling movie palace into a successful performing arts center, died after a brief illness. He was 74.

"He was clearly the true believer in the potential of downtown," said Michael Calvert, president of Operation New Birmingham. "He proved that if you give people a reason to come downtown, they will."

Whitmire began a three-decade love affair with the Alabama Theatre in 1976, when he moved to Birmingham from Knoxville to manage a hardware company. The Alabama was still a movie theater, and Whitmire would play the Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ before shows, entertaining audiences with classic tunes, nearly always including "Stars Fell on Alabama."

In 1986, Mr. Whitmire led a grassroots effort to save the Alabama from bankruptcy and became president of Birmingham Landmarks Inc., which bought the Alabama, renovated it and turned it into a major performing arts venue for movies, concerts, theater, dance and private events. Birmingham Landmarks also has been raising money to renovate

the Lyric Theatre, which is across the street from the Alabama on Third Avenue North.

"He was a legend in the historic theater circles," said George Culver, who now runs Birmingham Children's Theatre but once oversaw the historic Ritz Theatre in Talladega. He and Whitmire both were on the board of the League of Historic American Theatres. "He was much beloved," Culver said. "He was such a kind, gentle man, and everyone knows how he almost single-handedly spearheaded saving one of the grand movie palaces in America."

In 2002, Whitmire published *The Alabama Theatre: Showplace of the South*, a coffee-table book with photos and history of the theater. Whitmire dedicated the book to his late wife, Linda, a longtime volunteer at the theater who died in 2001.

"We had no children, and a lot of people said the theater was our child," Whitmire said at the time.

It was a rare night at the Alabama when Whitmire wasn't standing outside the box office on the Alabama Walk of Fame -- a sidewalk of stars dedicated to Alabama luminaries -- that he helped



© The Alabama Theatre

create.

"Other than Linda, it was the love of his life," Hanks said of the theater. Louise Beard, whose Time Step Dance Studio held its annual recital at the Alabama for more than two decades, said it was clear how much Whitmire loved his job. "The people who worked for him and volunteered also loved that theater, but it started with Cecil," she said. "He was always there, always involved."

PRESERVATION WATCH

The Alabama Trust made a difference in MY neighborhood!



Monroe House, Huntsville's Twickenham Historic District

Huntsville

As historic preservation principles have brought about the renaissance of Huntsville's Twickenham Historic District, we have watched as thoughtful owners have transformed old, dilapidated historic houses into showplace homes.

We have also seen the desirability of the neighborhood place at risk some of our district's less noteworthy structures, and demolition requests are occurring with greater frequency on our Preservation Commission's agenda. An applicant recently requested permission to demolish a 1940's house. As my neighbors and I made plans to attend the Commission meeting to ask that the Commission deny this request, we asked David Schneider and the Alabama Trust for guidance and support. David not only provided a letter from the Alabama Trust explaining why the petition should be denied, but he also attended the meeting and appealed directly to our Commission. The Commission voted to save the house and deny the demolition petition by a strong majority vote.

There is little doubt that this vote was a direct outcome of the statements made by David Schneider at our meeting. David had the specialized knowledge, expertise, and training to address the Commission members and explain why this demolition request should be denied. His advocacy not only saved

this particular home but strengthened precedent for the denial of future demolition requests.

There are many residents in our neighborhood who are most grateful to David and the Alabama Trust for the difference they made in our neighborhood.

Rosemary Lee, Huntsville

Birmingham

I live in a historic neighborhood dating back to before 1900 and a few months ago a Walgreens store was announced to be built on a site about a block from my house and from a national district (Chestnut Hill HD). The project initially would have demolished a beautiful old mission-style fire station dating back to 1927-1928 (National Register, 1990) but due to public outcry, the formation of a citizen group named *I Believe in Birmingham* that came into being to try and stop the demolition, and the help of the David Schneider and



Fire Station 22, Birmingham

the Alabama Trust, Fire Station #22 has been saved from demolition. Through its association with the National Trust, the Alabama Trust was able to help confirm an agreement that the National Trust had negotiated with a number of national drugstore chains to not demolish any structures listed in the National Register.

The developer responded by revising the plans for the entire site to incorporate Station 22 and are well on their way to having the plans brought into being. We will even be having a design charrette for the new Walgreens building to incorporate elements of design style from the immediate area in the coming weeks.

This is a win-win for everyone and a very welcome one. This outcome shows what can be achieved when people of good faith work together. Our sincere thanks to the National Trust for negotiating this agreement eight years ago. There is no telling how many structures around the country it has already saved and will save in the future.

Alison Glascock, Birmingham



Main Street Buildings, Springville Historic District

Springville

I wanted to thank the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation for its hard work and speed. Your assistance helped Springville save two of its most important historic commercial buildings. Your visit along with photos and guidance helped convince the Mayor and City Council to accept these Buildings as a gift. We plan to shore them up until they can be sold or renovated by either the city or someone else.

Brian Skinner, Springville

The Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation would like to thank Historic Huntsville Foundation, members of the City of Huntsville and City of Springville Historic Preservation Commissions, Steve Jones and his family of Springville, members of Springville's City Council, and other interested citizens in Huntsville and Springville that made these preservation successes possible.

PRESERVATION: PLACES IN PERIL

Saved (Or at Least Rerieved!)

Allen & Jemison Building, Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa County (2009). When Christ Episcopal Church announced plans in December 2008 to demolish the Allen & Jemison Hardware Building, it seemed like an insurmountable preservation challenge. One of the most prominent landmarks within the city's historic commercial core, no viable alternative seemed available that would allow the church to retain the property for its long term expansion needs, as the church had no present need for the space or desire to maintain the unused building. Enter the City of Tuscaloosa

Saved

Tuscaloosa gets a few more kudos for two other landmarks that have been moved out of the "Endangered" category. While work remains to be done on both, these are now in supportive hands. Special thanks are extended to the Tuscaloosa Preservation Society.

Queen City Pool House, Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa County (1998). The Queen City Pool House was designed by Don Buel Schuyler, an apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright, and constructed through the Works Progress Administration in 1943 to serve as the bath and changing



Queen City Pool House, Tuscaloosa

Lost



Davis Farm House, Oxford

and the Arts and Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa with a plan for a long-term lease to convert the building into an arts center containing a gallery, space for rehearsals and performances, workshops and studio rooms for artists. Through the tenacious leadership of William L. Snowden, Director of the city's Office of Planning and Urban Development, the project is inching closer to reality. In June, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the city a \$1.5 million loan that will be used to complete structural and exterior repairs. The Arts Council is in the

house for a city pool. In a wonderfully creative adaptive use project, the City of Tuscaloosa is converting the building for use as a museum showcasing local transportation history. Located near the Black Warrior River, the museum will tell the story of the river and its relationship to the founding and development of the city. The University of Alabama will manage the facility.

John Drish House, Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa County (2006). The Drish House, built in 1837 as the centerpiece of a large plantation on the edge of town and one of Tuscaloosa's architectural landmarks, had fallen on hard times a long time before it was listed as a Place in Peril in 2006. Historic American Buildings Survey photos of the house taken in 1934 show it in use as an auto parts store known as the Tuscaloosa Wrecking Company. The house was later acquired by a church who built intrusive addi-

The Davis Farmhouse, Oxford (2005). "One of the most important early residences left anywhere in Calhoun County or the Oxford-Anniston area,"* the Davis Farmhouse in Oxford was recent destroyed by arson. Built circa 1850 and referred to in Historic American Buildings Survey documentation from the 1930s as the Caver or Caver-Christian Place, the house was the centerpiece of a large plantation and was sited near a "boiling spring" that "undoubtedly attracted populations of humans since the end of the Ice



Allen & Jemison Building, Tuscaloosa

process of raising the funding necessary to complete the rehabilitation of the first floor.



John Drish House, Tuscaloosa
H.A.B.S. Photo, Library of Congress

tions to either side of it. The Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society stepped in and acquired the house in 2007 and has since completed extensive stabilization work, including the recent removal of the additions. While no firm plans have been made for the future of the house, it is now stable and in capable and sensitive hands.

Age." The site is contiguous to two other highly significant Native-American archaeological resources that have been almost destroyed: one to provide fill dirt for a development project and the other as part of a new sports complex for the city. A more modern barn in the complex burned earlier this year. The fate of the surviving outbuildings and spring remain an important preservation issue for the area.

*Harry O. Holstein, Ph.D., Robert Gamble, "The Archaeological, Architectural, and Historical Significance of the Davis Farm Complex in Oxford, Alabama," 2005.

KUDOS

Wilcox County Jail preserved for future

*by Rev. Ed Shirley President of the Wilcox County Historical Society
Article courtesy of the Wilcox County Progressive Era*

The Wilcox County Historical Society (WCHS) is putting some sweat equity into the Wilcox County Jail. The WCHS employed Joe Harris to secure all windows and doors. The exterior trim is repaired, replaced, scraped and painted at a total cost of approximately \$9,500. The Historical Society is paying \$6,000, and Wilcox County is seeking resources to pay the difference.

The WCHS, through the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC), received funds as a result of a cell tower's placement in the immediate area. This public/private partnership allowed for the completion of the jail renovations.

The Wilcox County Historical Society and many others are grateful that the Wilcox County Commission put a new roof on the structure some years ago. Had it not been for that essential protective measure, the structure would have significantly deteriorated and possibly lost.

This jail is the most attractive building in Camden. The Victorian architecture is superb in the brick work around the arched windows and the ornate wooden porch is adorable.

According to Bob Gamble, architectural historian with the AHC, "The front of the jail was where the sheriff and his family lived. State law at that time re-

quired the sheriff to live on the premises in case a fire broke out and the prisoners needed to be released, plus his presence was indeed added security."

Talk in the community is about the location of the forthcoming Wilcox County Civil Rights and Heritage Museum. With some cooperative collective momentum, after this major step to restore the jail, the 'talk' can now be turned into 'action.' Not much remains to be done in order to open this building as a museum: clean out the accumulated junk inside, organize what is to remain, scrape and paint the inside walls, update the electrical system, and add a restroom. All could happen within a year if proper productive steps are taken.

The museum will exhibit old photographs, artifacts, and locally produced documentary programs featuring interviews from those in Wilcox County with recollections about the Civil Rights Era in Camden.

The significance of Camden in the Civil Rights Era would be used by local students, residents and visitors and highlight the important history of local law enforcement.

It is wonderful to see the "jail" preserved. It is very rare to find an old jail still standing in any Alabama



Old Wilcox County Jail, Camden



town, especially a jail this old. In most cases, only the historic church buildings remain. Local congregations have affectionately preserved the church structure through the years like a family heirloom, but mills, theaters, general stores, and jails have disappeared in decay.

keep us posted

The Alabama Trust

wants to hear about your
local issues and successes.

Please send information to
the Alabama Trust for
Historic Preservation

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Find us on
Facebook

The Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation has three separate pages on Facebook. The first is a general page for the Trust. The second is dedicated to the Places in Peril. And the third is for our new affinity group, the Alabama Old House Lovers.

The pages provide an online community gathering place where we can share ideas and information about issues relating to historic preservation in Alabama.

Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation
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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

ALABAMA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
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Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation is the voice for the future of Alabama's historic buildings, neighborhoods and places. We invite you to join us. Member benefits include quarterly newsletters with event listings and the latest preservation news; opportunities for preservation conferences; organized tours statewide; networking opportunities with other preservation minded people; a statewide advocacy program for preservation.

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Your membership contributions and gifts are tax deductible to the extent of the law. Please make your check payable to Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation, or choose one of the following:

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