

THE FSTC HISTORIC BUILDING PLAQUES PROJECT

Like the founding of Fairhope, the plaques started as an idea. In 2021, Wayne "Coach" Miller and the FSTC Education Committee believed that plaques on historic buildings with QR codes linking the history of local buildings to today would interest both residents and visitors alike. Traditional and eclectic buildings are on the twenty-building walking tour including the town's original one-room public library, the Greek Revival influenced Bank of Fairhope, and not one, but two castles.



Plaque 7

The Education Committee organizes the Economics and History Course for prospective members, plans the annual FSTC Lecture Series, produces the *Fairhoppers* newsletter, and provides free outreach to local groups, small and large, on the history of and the present role of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation.

THE FAIRHOPE SINGLE TAX CORPORATION



Much is owed to the principled and tenacious Populist reformers who founded Fairhope in 1894. The Fairhope Single Tax Corporation continues to apply their ideas in a 21st Century environment for the enhancement of the community. For more information, including the links to all of the plaque texts, scan the QR code below.



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FAIRHOPE HISTORIC BUILDING PLAQUES



DOWNTOWN SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR MAP

USE THE MAP TO DISCOVER FAIRHOPE'S HISTORIC BUILDINGS. SCAN THE QR CODES ON THE PLAQUES TO LEARN THE HISTORY. ENJOY THE TOUR!



1. Old City Hall / Fairhope Museum of History
24 North Section Street
2. Gaston Motor Company/Villa Decor
312 North Section Street
3. Gaston Auto Livery Garage/Mobile Bay Realty
10 North Section
4. Fairhope Pharmacy
398 Fairhope Avenue
5. Bank of Fairhope/Christmas 'Round the Corner
396 Fairhope Avenue
6. Mershon Bros/Pitman Building
395 Fairhope Avenue
7. Gaston Building
336 Fairhope Avenue
8. Fairhope Coal & Supply Co. / Hardware Bldg.
Fantasy Island Toys
335 Fairhope Avenue
9. Justice Lowell's Office/Pearl Restaurant
334 Fairhope Avenue
10. People's Cooperative/Fairhope Hardware
301 Fairhope Avenue
11. Fairhope Hotel/Summit Street Inn
131 Fairhope Avenue
12. Dr. Goddard's Office/Fairhope Film Festival Office & Theatre
122 Fairhope Avenue
13. Fairhope Public Library
10 North Summit Street
14. Becker-Stearns House/Fairhope Inn
63 South Church Street
15. Fairhope First Baptist Church / Theatre 98
350 Morphy Avenue
16. Ingersol Starkey House/Colony Veterinarian
359 Morphy Avenue
- Coastal Alabama Community College Campus
17. Bell Building
South School Street
18. Manual Training Building/Dahlgren Hall
Fairhope Avenue
19. Fairhope Storybook Castle/Sheldon Castle
456 Oak Avenue
20. Fairhope Storybook Castle/Mosher Castle
457 Oak Avenue

Plaques researched, edited, compiled, and installed by the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Education Committee.

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Special thanks to FSTC Executive Director Jennifer Sanford, Catherine King, and Savan Wilson for proofreading, editing, and formatting.

Historic Photographs:

Courtesy of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Online Archives and Courtesy of the Fairhope Museum of History

Typeset and Present Photographs by Alan Samry

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Editor's Note

It has been my privilege to complete this limited print edition for the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation. The book is available in the Fairhope Single Tax Office Library and the Fairhope Public Library collection. A digital copy is also available on the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Online Archives.

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Fairhope: A Single Tax Colony

(Scan the left QR Code on any plaque to access this summary.)

Fairhope, Alabama, is one of two single tax colonies remaining in the United States (the other is Arden, Delaware). The community, also known as the Colony, was established in 1894 by a group from Des Moines, Iowa, headed by E.B. Gaston, who wanted to establish a colony based on the single tax theories of economist, journalist, and social reformer Henry George. These theories were presented in his great book *Progress and Poverty*, published in 1879.

The Fairhope Single Tax Corporation (FSTC) continues to thrive and devotes its income and resources to improving the community. This non-profit land trust owns and leases 4,500 acres of land in and around Fairhope to over 3,900 lessees. Leases are for ninety-nine years which is secure as a deed for the lessee.

The Demonstration fee, or rent, is used on Brick-and-Mortar projects such as major funding for the Fairhope Public Library, The Fairhope Museum of History, Thomas Hospital, Coastal Alabama Community College's Performing Art Center as well as projects that benefit local schools. Over 20 different nature parks and sporting parks in Fairhope were deeded to the city with the stipulation that they would be kept for the benefit of all.

For more information see www.fairhopesingletax.com



**1-City Hall/Fairhope Museum
1928**

The old City Hall, located at 24 N. Section St., was built in 1928 in the Mission Revival Style by O. Forster and Sons. The style was popular at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. It is characterized by white stucco walls, clay tile roofs,

use of archways, and deep-set doors and windows, Mission Revival architecture was commonly found in California, the southwest, and some parts of Florida. It was a less common architectural style elsewhere, making the old City Hall building a unique example.

The building's roof is flat with very few and shallow overhangs. In a wet climate, such as the heavy rains and hurricanes experienced in Fairhope, this style would seem problematic. Large amounts of rain can pool on the roof and are not directed away from the building's foundation. However, Fairhope's unusually high elevation above Mobile Bay allows an adequate amount of drainage to counteract these problems and has made it possible for the building to endure.

The City Hall originally housed the mayor's office, Council Chamber, jail, and "chemical and hose truck." Space was also provided for public gatherings. Over time, as the city grew, the building was converted into the Fairhope Police Station. In 2002, the police station moved out and the building was mostly unused.



2-Gaston Motor Company 1924

James E. Gaston Sr. started *Gaston Auto Livery* in 1914 and the business quickly expanded. By December 1916 he was selling various makes of cars as a sub-dealer for L. G. Adams in Mobile. In August of 1923, *Gaston Motor Company* was awarded a direct

franchise and became an authorized Ford dealer when it sold 64 vehicles, including trucks and tractors.

In 1924 needing a bigger showroom, James E. Gaston Sr. started construction of this building on 12 North Section Street. The Fairhope Courier reported that the new showroom was "undoubtedly one of the most attractive fronts in the county and does credit to the builders, Mr. M. Dyson and assistants and to the enterprise of Mr. Gaston. The additional room 30x40 was greatly needed by Mr. Gaston for display of the new cars he handles, his accessories and repair parts." The showroom window was the first plate glass window in Fairhope.

James E. Gaston Sr. (1890-1966) was the son of Fairhope founder E.B. Gaston. In addition to being President of Gaston Motors for decades, he was very active in community organizations and government. James E. Gaston Sr. was a long time Fairhope City Councilman who served on the Finance and Street Committee. He was a member of the county commission for 16 years, elected to several terms as Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce, and held a seat on the Board of Directors of the Rotary Club.

In 1936 the National Ford Dealers organization honored James E. Gaston at their national convention. Henry Ford personally presented him with a 1937 Ford.

During the 50th Anniversary of Gaston Motor Company in 1964, James E. Gaston Jr., who had taken over as President of the company, praised his father for always adhering to his motto of "Service First".

Structural Description

Gaston Motor Company, 12 North Section Street, c. 1924, altered. One-story automotive sales building, now a retail store: stuccoed on the storefront level, with vented metal screen above to parapet; streamlined comer, deep metal framed plate glass show

windows Aluminum-and-glass entry near ell where building abuts the side of its neighbor to the east. Always a significant corner location in Fairhope, it was for many years the show room with adjacent sales lot of the *Gaston Motor Company's* Ford dealership and built adjacent to *Gaston Auto Livery Garage*, a business that dated from 1914.



3-Gaston Auto Livery Garage 1920

James E. Gaston Sr. started Gaston Auto Livery in 1914 by building a 40 foot street frontage garage next to the Vanderslice Blacksmith Shop. Initially the business was an automobile transport and day trip service and by 1933, they were the only legally licensed taxi service in Fairhope. However, the garage services rapidly

expanded. A new concrete floor was installed in 1916 and welding; inner tube repair; auto repair and parts; paint kits; a battery filling station and sale of gasoline were added to the business. By December 1916, Gaston was selling Fords at the location.

Even though the *Garage* sold gas for cash only, The "Home of Cheerful Service", became one of the largest retailers of gasoline in the county and a new tank with three times the capacity of the old one was installed in September 1917. In November of 1917 a big illuminated "Garage" sign lit up downtown Fairhope. In 1923 *Gaston Garage* became an authorized Ford dealer selling both new and used vehicles.

James E. Gaston Sr. (1890-1966) was the son of Fairhope founder E.B. Gaston. In addition to being President of *Gaston Motors* for decades, he was very active in community organizations and government where he was well known for his opinion that utilities should be owned by the public.

James E. Gaston Sr. was a long time Fairhope City Councilman who served on the Finance and Street Committee. He was also a member of the county commission for 16 years, elected to several terms as Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce, and held a seat on the Board of Directors of the Rotary Club.

Structural Description

Gaston Auto Livery Garage (Comer Market), 401 Fairhope Avenue, c. 1920, altered. Two-story retail commercial building with flat parapet, now refaced in ELFS (or new stucco?), its side along the Comer Court serving as the primary facade and entry; recessed double-door entry on Fairhope Avenue, not presently in use; plate windows in wooden frames; double doors above entry bay upstairs, not original. The side along the Comer Courtyard, originally a row of open service bays, now contains double wood and glass doors. Balcony similar to one on Fairhope face fronts this whole side wall with

exterior stairs to upperlevel; windows along here look like old fanlights. This was the service wing for the *Gaston Automobile* dealership; because of its historic association and relatively intact service bay openings, it has been kept in the historic district even though NC.



**4-Mershon, Crawford, Pitman Building
1929**

There has been a locally owned mercantile store on this main corner of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street since 1895. The first was a wooden framed building which housed the short-lived Fairhope Mercantile Company and was purchased by the Mershon brothers, Arthur and Nathaniel. Their general store also housed Fairhope's first post office and looked out at the community's first

utilities: a water well and pump at the main street intersection. Henry Crawford later bought and operated the wooden store. The Mershons and Crawfords were connected to the Gaston family, founders of Fairhope, and their legacies remain strong in the community.

In 1918, J.I. Pitman arrived at Fairhope on a Sunday afternoon bay boat from Mobile. He saw the For Sale sign on the Crawford store at the top of the clay dirt road. J.I. (Ivy) went home to the farm in Salitpa and returned to Fairhope with borrowed money and wife Ethel Waite and babies to begin a new venture as owner of J.I. Pitman Mercantile. The young Single Tax Colony on Mobile Bay offered opportunity. In 1929 he replaced the wooden structure with the present building of Clay City tile, which was stuccoed in a 1939 modernization.

In 1940, J.I. Pitman and Company, including sons Cecil and Ike and daughter Mary (Marvin Berglin), celebrated twenty years of serving Fairhope. During World War II, Mr. Pitman was unable to manage the store without his sons, and the building was leased as several different businesses, including a restaurant.

The business became Bedsole's and Gwin in 1952, and Wilkin's in the 1980's.

In 2005 the store was updated as several retail spaces. The Cat's Meow continues the tradition of the locally owned business. The Pitman family interests still own the building.



5-Fairhope Coal and Supply Company 1936

Located at 335 Fairhope Avenue, The Fairhope Coal and Supply Company was built in 1936 by Marmaduke Dyson and Robert E. Stapleton. As part of a consortium of builders (Dyson, Stapleton, Sheldon, Lawrence, and Johnson), the men hoped to increase their

stock of supplies and store them in the supply yard behind the building, which backed up to the Dyson house on Magnolia Avenue. Later and into the 1970's, it was operated as the Fairhope Hardware store. The word "Hardware" appears above the store today in the marquee of the building.

For over forty-five years, Fantasy Island Toys has served Fairhope in this building. It is family-owned and is hailed as "one of the South's favorite neighborhood toy stores" where every toy is selected "to provide the best quality of play."

The other half of the building is now occupied by Tiny Town, a children's clothing shop that has been in Fairhope since 2016.

Structural Description

The building has a smooth, stucco façade over Clay City tile block. It is the second Art Deco building in the city of Fairhope. The decoration on the building includes a ric rac design molding, cast iron medallions that have stylized floral designs, a central recessed entry with fluted pylon surround, and piers with pleats. Curvilinear and geometric design elements are featured. The central entry bay has a stepped-up parapet - a stair design at the top of the triangular gable at the end of the building. A scalloped flat marquee spans the two separate stores. Paired single wood entry doors lead into the shops on either side of the recessed entry.



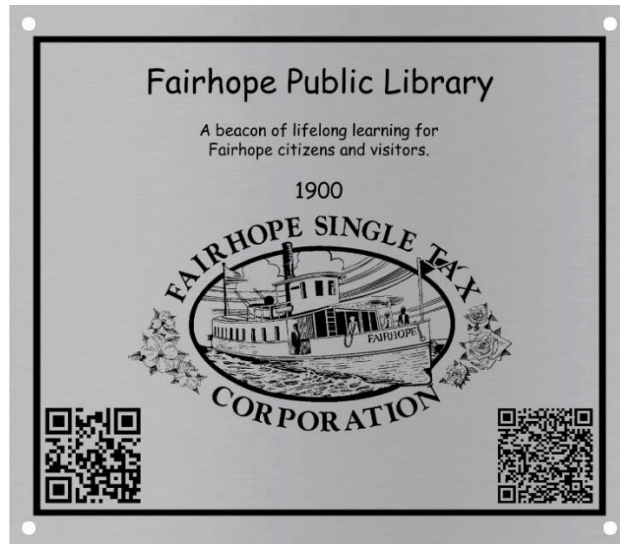
6-People's Cooperative Store 1922

Located at 301 Fairhope Avenue, The People's Cooperative Store was built in 1922. It is a two-story commercial building with a 50' frontage. Originally, its exterior was brick, then stucco. The lower storefront today is a modern design of aluminum and glass

with central supporting piers. The auditorium upstairs is intact. In the co-op days, it was used for community social gatherings and meetings.

This building is an embodiment of the Fairhope cooperative ideal and is one of the most important buildings in Fairhope's commercial history. It was owned by 115 people, each person an equal owner with one share, one vote. The store carried groceries, fertilizer, farm supplies, clothing, shoes, etc. It also had a restaurant and a co-op bakery where one could purchase bread and pastries. Unfortunately, it was not a great success and the co-op closed in 1926. Since its closing, the store has had several occupants: Hammond's Grocery Store, Piggy Wiggly Grocery Store, Bill's Dollar Store, and Fairhope Hardware Store.

Since the closing of the Fairhope Hardware Store in 2018, the building has remained empty. The store has come under new ownership and will undergo an impressive renovation to include a restaurant, retail spaces, and an event space upstairs with an associated roof terrace. The building is to be named People's Cooperative, paying homage to the founding fathers.



7-Fairhope Public Library 1908

Marie Stevens Case Howland (1836-1921) was, according to Fairhope Founder Ernest Berry Gaston, "a woman of broad culture, an author of deserved reputation, a thinker and worker along reform lines, an accomplished linguist and a musician." Mrs. Howland's legacy continued to grow in Fairhope. Howland's husband Edward Howland

died in the socialist Topolobampo, Mexico colony in 1890. Three years later the colony collapsed, and Marie returned to the United States. Howland corresponded with and was invited to join the Fairhope Single Tax Colony by its secretary Ernest Berry Gaston, and she arrived in the spring of 1899.

A room in Marie Howland's home in "The Pines," on the southeast corner of Magnolia Avenue and Summit Street, became Fairhope's first library. Edward Howland's books, collected between 1860 and 1866 and numbering approximately 1,000, formed the nucleus of the Fairhope Public Library. Approximately 250 books from the original collection, including the catalog created in Topolobampo, are stored in the Fairhope Museum of History archive. The Fairhope Public Library in Howland's home was dedicated on April 18, 1900. Home-made ice cream was served on the parlor table to a roomful of guests, soon to be patrons.

Having had her fill of people reading in her living room, Mrs. Howland pleaded for a new library building. Joseph Fels, Fairhope's benefactor, put \$1,000 toward the new building. Mrs. Howland returned the west part of her Fairhope Single Tax Corporation (FSTC) lease to the colony for use as the site for the new library building. The one-room library, the first such building constructed for library use in Alabama, was completed in 1908, just next door to "The Pines."

Mrs. Howland died in 1921, leaving the Howland Book Collection to the FSTC. Her memorial service was held in the library. Howland was ably assisted for years by Lydia J. Newcomb Comings, who was instrumental in establishing Baldwin County's first museum in 1922 within the walls of the Fairhope Public Library. Other influential librarians included Mary Heath Lee, the first librarian with formal library training and Bertha Mershon, wife of Dr. Clarence Leoma Mershon. Later librarians include artist and children's author Anna

Braune, Betty Suddeth, and Tamara Dean, the latter two serving as director for more than 20 years.

Building History

The Fairhope Public Library, like much of Fairhope, was a Fairhope Single Tax Corporation (FSTC) institution. The original one room building with the fireplace on the northern wall remains. A front porch and central room were added in 1919 and the south wings were added in 1925, in time for the Fairhope Public Library its 25th anniversary and host the Alabama Library Association's annual meeting. In 1951 an addition was built on the east side of the library. A cinder block addition with meeting space, a kitchen, and bathrooms was added in 1974.



8-Fairhope Hotel/Summit Street Inn 1925

Captain John "Jack" R. Cross and his wife Eloise Cardiner came to Fairhope in 1908. A native of the United Kingdom, Captain Jack Cross earned his rank as an officer as one of Queen Victoria's Westminster Guards. Upon arriving in Fairhope, they stayed on the Ring Farm outside of town for two years before moving into town. They became innkeepers at The Gables, located on the southwest corner of Church Street and Fairhope Avenue. They were so successful they decided to build their own place.

Today's Summit Street Inn was built in 1925 as the new Fairhope Hotel by Marmaduke Dyson, a well-known contractor. His distinctive style is easily recognizable in many Fairhope homes for his rock-faced or dimpled cinder blocks, known locally as Dyson Block.

Cross served on the library board of trustees and was a member of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, was a charter member in 1923 of the Baldwin County Historical Society. They say Cross never met a stranger, with newspaper accounts referring to him as the "Sage of Fairhope" who corresponded with thousands of people across the globe.

There is an iconic photograph of him visiting with another native of England, friend and Mobile artist Roderick Mackenzie, on the front porch rocking chairs. Cross, "friend of artists and authors from every section of the world," died in 1932 at the age of 82.

In 1948 W. C. Mason purchased the property and continued operating it as a hotel. It was also the meeting place for Fairhope Rotary during those years.

By 1958, Mason had turned it into a private residence. He sold it to the Milham family in the 1970s who returned it to its quaint hotel roots and opened it as the Yardarm Guesthouse and the Square Rigger Restaurant. Fairhoppers remember their fine dining experiences there in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the late 1990s, the front porch was glassed in, and the building served as a counseling center.

In 2021, Fairhope real estate broker, Shelley Springer, purchased the property. The first thing to go was the glass porch enclosure, restoring the original look, accommodating overnight guests, and modernizing its 100-year-old roots and renaming it The Summit Street Inn.



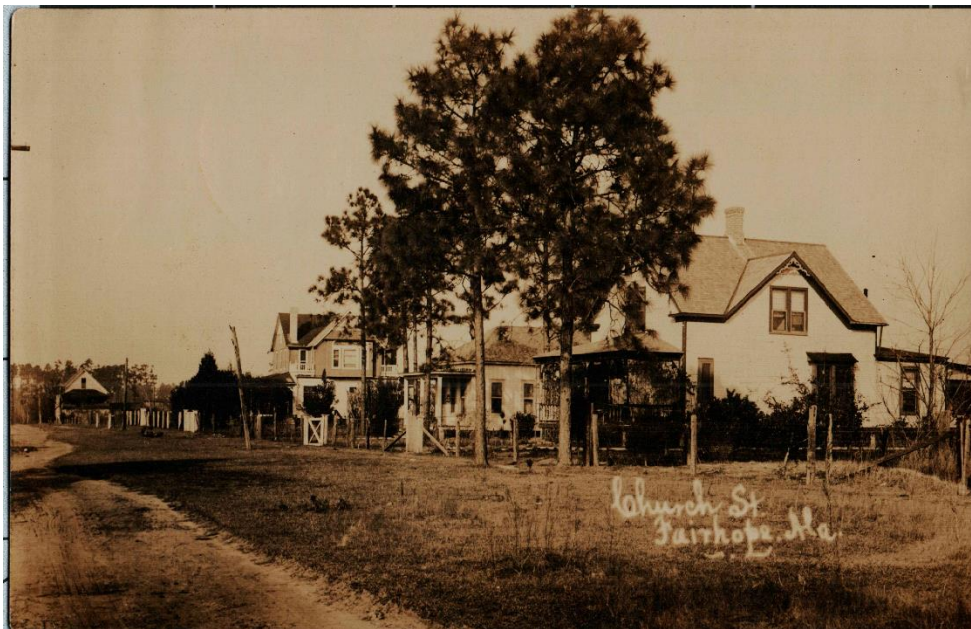
9-The Godard Building 1918

Claude George Godard came to Fairhope in 1916. A Mobile Medical College graduate, Dr. Godard first practiced medicine with Dr. Clarence Mershon, a practicing physician and owner of Fairhope Pharmacy. Shortly after, Dr. Godard left to serve in World War I in the 52nd Infantry Division.

Upon his return from service, around 1920, he opened his drugstore and medical practice in the building at 122 Fairhope Avenue. The building, constructed in 1918, is named after Dr. Godard, but he was not the first occupant. Ralph Keller, Fairhope's first rural route mail carrier, lived there before Dr. Godard started his medical practice. Dr. Godard practiced medicine from his office with patients entering the side door along Summit Street.

During his 60 years of medical practice in Fairhope, Dr. Godard delivered hundreds of babies and made thousands of house calls in his Model A Ford. He also founded the local American Legion Post 199 and helped found Thomas Hospital. Dr. Godard is buried in the Fairhope Colony Cemetery.

For several decades Moyers drugstore occupied this space. The building has been renovated/updated several times over the years into one large and two small areas. The larger area served as an antiques store, and an art gallery. The two smaller sections of the building are now used by a salon and a travel agency. Fairhope Film Festival made their headquarters in the smaller back room in 2014, but relocated to the largest area in 2017.



10-The Beckner House 1906

In March of 1905 the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, a colony of just a few hundred people, purchased the De La Mare Tract, approximately five acres between Church Street and Section Street in the heart of town. In November of 1905, The Fairhope

Courier reported that J. M Beckner, his wife and daughter were planning to "get up a cottage on a lot" in the new tract. J. M. Beckner was a 63-year-old Single-Taxer born in Indiana who came South to participate in the Fairhope experiment. He chose E. D. Brann as his architect/builder, as he was also the local fire chief and had a good reputation.

By late January of 1906, the foundation had been laid and by April, the house was finished. The Fairhope Courier noted, "This is one of the most attractive and comfortable homes in Fairhope . . . and an ornament to the town."

The Beckners were in their new home only five months when the hurricane of 1906 struck, heavily damaging it. Although the exterior of the home showed no change, there was \$200-\$300 of damage to the interior from lashing rains that penetrated through the plaster walls.

Since the 1906 storm, there have been no serious threats to the integrity of the house. Warren Stearns bought the house around 1912 and owned it until the mid-1980's. Old time Fairhoppers recall the fish market out of the back of the house from the 1920's until Hurricane Frederic devastated Mobile and Baldwin County in 1979. The Baker family owned the home when it was placed on the National Register in 1988.

The house, described as a Midwestern farmhouse style, is a one and a half story frame, cross gable, two by two bay structure. After Hurricane Frederic, this farmhouse style property was converted into an inn and a bed and breakfast. A decade later, owner/chef Tyler King renovated the house and brought new life into it with a creole cottage style and opened the Fairhope Inn. In 2019, Paige Dawson purchased the Fairhope Inn. Dawson upgraded the restaurant area and upstairs lodging area while preserving the home's historic features.



11-First Baptist Church / Theater 98 Playhouse 1924

On July 27, 1924, Pastor Douglas J. Peters led the formal opening of Fairhope Baptist Church's new sanctuary located at 350 Morphy Avenue. 250 people attended the service.

The construction of the one story cross-gabled church building cost \$5000.00. In 1946, an educational building was added to the rear, the design of which is reported to have "not pleased many of the ladies of the congregation". First Baptist Church of Fairhope left the building in the early 1950s.

After decades of diverse uses, a local theater legend, Tom Pocase, converted the building into an intimate, three-quarter round theater where his company, Theater 8:15, specialized in musicals. In 1985, the community theater group, Theater 98, renovated the building and it became known as the Theater 98 Playhouse.

Theater 98 Community Theater Group

Community-theater groups have been an active part of the arts scene in Fairhope since 1912. Theater 98 was founded in 1960 when existing theater groups on the Eastern Shore merged. They performed at various venues around Baldwin County before becoming dormant in the 1970s. The group re-activated in 1983 and finally found a permanent home in 1985 when they signed a lease for 350 Morphy Avenue with the City of Fairhope. People often assume Theater 98 refers to the number of seats in the playhouse, but the name comes from Highway 98, the primary roadway along the Eastern Shore.

Theater 98, a non-profit organization, adds exceptional theatrical productions to the vibrant performing arts scene in Fairhope. The group has won numerous awards at State and Regional Theater Festivals, as well as, the Mobile Arts Council's Arts Organization Award.

Historic Structure Designation

Baldwin County Historical Commission designated the Theater 98 Playhouse as a historic structure significant to the city's history. A plaque was presented as part of Theater 98's 50th Anniversary

Celebration in 2011. The Fairhope Historic Preservation Committee also presented a historic structure plaque during the celebration.

Structural Description

350 Morphy Avenue, 1924, enlarged 1946. One-story cross-gabled church building, styled like a substantial gabled bungalow. Built of smooth white cement block with a Dyson block foundation and quoins; primary windows with Queen Anne upper sash (border of stained glass with single clear central light) over single-light lower sash; gabled entry portico on Morphy side, square stuccoed piers with carved brackets and double paneled entry. Brick sills and brick soldier floor course. Rear two-story section to backstage has block that appears to be a less fine aggregate, windows 6-over-6 and 3V-over-1 sash. The 1946 enlargement was the addition of a broad front-gabled utility building on concrete slab foundation; asbestos shingles, metal-roll-out windows which now have brick veneer on facade and fake Colonial decor, i.e., shutters, wrought iron post supports.



12-The Ingersoll-Starkey House 1918

This bungalow was built by Dyson and Sons around 1918 and Mr. & Mrs. Fred P. Ingersoll lived in the house when they were first married. In the 1980s, it was renovated into a veterinary clinic.

Builder and Occupants

The Ingersoll-Starkey House, at 359 Morphy Avenue, was the first house on Morphy Avenue. It was here that Mr. & Mrs. Fred

Puterbaugh Ingersoll moved when they were married. Mr. Ingersoll came to Fairhope from Montgomery County, Iowa - southwest of Des Moines, Iowa - in 1921 as a 15-year-old. Mr. Ingersoll's father sold tallow from his cattle to Joseph Fels - a great supporter of Henry George and Fairhope. Fred worked as a plumber and then as a carpenter for Mr. Dyson, who built the house. Later, Fred had a dairy business on 80 acres on Greeno Road.

Fred's wife, Sadie Mae Winberg, was the granddaughter of a Swedish immigrant who in 1840, at the age of 12, stole away on a ship sailing to Pensacola, FL. He found his way to Point Clear, AL where he was found living in a hollow tree. The Winberg family thought that all single taxers were socialists so they were not supporters of the single tax theory, in opposition to her husband's family.

Fred's son, Charles, served Fairhope as a Director of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation from 1979-1984 and then as President from 1985-1999. In an interview that Charles held with F. Simmons and R. Rockwell in 1992, he spoke about his admiration for the "broad diversity and backgrounds of people who make Fairhope unique". He mentioned that he grew up in a "divided household" with regard to its support of the ideals of the single tax colony.

The Herbert Starkey family lived in the house from 1935-1970. This family operated the Electric Maid Bakery at 333 Fairhope Avenue, which was built in 1936. In the 1980s the house was turned into a veterinary clinic. The Bay Animal Clinic first occupied the building followed by the Colony Animal Clinic in 2013.

Structural Description

The Ingersoll-Starkey House was built by Marmaduke Dyson and Sons circa 1918. The house was constructed of "Dyson block", a dimpled concrete block made in Dyson's back yard. Clay City terra cotta tile and brick were also used. The front-gabled craftsman bungalow was covered with stucco.

The front of the building is dominated by a gabled porch which is slightly offset. There are three bay windows. The central entryway had a barrel-type awning and its arched openings in either side were glassed in at some point. The wood sash windows were fitted with grills. There were exposed rafter rails and a standing seam metal roof. A small gabled cockpit sat atop the roof of the main part of the house. The materials used to construct the house were designated as Art Deco.

A garage was added onto the house at a later date. The home was remodeled in 2017 with the addition of two kennels.



13-Justice Lowell's Office 1917

John P. Lowell, Justice of the Peace and owner of JPL Realty, built his office on 334 Fairhope Avenue in 1917. Newspaper coverage of the building's opening reported that Justice Lowell was "very comfortable in his little office". When the Lowell Office closed in

1920, the building at 334 Fairhope Avenue became the home of P. A. "Pink" Creamer's City Barber Shop for many years. From the 1970s to 2002 it housed the Fairhope Health Foods store and, more recently, the Fairhope Fudge Emporium, R. Bistro and Pastry, and The Pearl Seafood Restaurant.

John P. Lowell was a man of diverse business and community interests. He owned substantial land holdings in downtown Fairhope and was a close friend of E. B. Gaston, a Fairhope founder. In 1907, he built the first of several cottages on Fels Avenue.

Judge Lowell actively promoted Fairhope and in 1910 photographed the area in order to edit and issue two editions of a popular 30-plus-page souvenir booklet entitled "Fairhope, Alabama, The All-Year Resort of the South."

In addition to being a realtor, insurance agent, notary public and Justice of the Peace, he served as secretary/treasurer of Palmetto Chemical, the drug company that manufactured the popular "Palmetto Blood Remedy"; director and secretary of the Mobile and Baldwin County Railroad Company; representative for the Baldwin County Alabama Oil Company; and business manager for the Mobile Medical and Surgical Journal. He was appointed to bring education issues to the attention of the Fairhope town council; and was a prominent member of the Fairhope Yacht Club. In 1918 he became the President of the Local Council of National Defense.

Mr. and Mrs. Lowell, along with Dr. and Mrs. R. A. Quarles, established the St. James Episcopal Church in Fairhope. Meetings were held in the Lowell's home on Fels Avenue until the congregation could purchase and remodel an abandoned church in town. In 1920, the highly esteemed Justice Lowell died suddenly of heart failure at the age of 63. Judge and Mrs. Lowell had two daughters.

Structural Description

Small one-story commercial building, about 15' frontage, brick veneer facade, now painted; flat parapet with blind panel below,

transom occluded by a metal panel above a modern deep suspended flat metal canopy. Two-bay storefront with a 15-lite door entry and wood-frame plate window.



14-Gaston Building 1924

The *Gaston Building*, built in 1924 at 336 Fairhope Avenue, housed the *Fairhope Courier* offices and print shop on the west side of the first floor. The space on the east side of the first floor and the rooms on the second floor were leased to various businesses and to the *Fairhope Single Tax Corporation* for office space. Local

builder Marmaduke Dyson was the contractor. The "new Courier building" replaced a onestory structure built in 1895. Today the Gaston Building is the home of the FSTC offices and library.

Dedication in 1974

At the building's half-century mark in 1974, it was dedicated to Ernest B. Gaston, the principal founder of Fairhope and the editor of the Fairhope Courier from 1894 until his death in 1937. Three of Gaston's five children (Frances Gaston Crawford, Arthur Fairhope Gaston and Cornelius A. Gaston) continued to edit and publish the paper until retiring and selling it in 1963.

E. B. Gaston (1861-1937)

In the late 19th century, Iowa populist and newspaperman E. B. Gaston was among many reform-minded people searching for solutions to the economic and social problems of the day. Gaston and his colleagues determined that economist Henry George's idea to tax only the land - a single tax - was a viable solution, and organized the Fairhope Industrial Association with plans to demonstrate the idea by establishing a model community. Gaston's 1894 essay True Cooperative Individualism detailed the practical application of George's theories and how the colony would work. This "Fairhope Plan" was put into practice in November 1894 when Gaston led a small group of reform-minded pioneers to the eastern shore of Mobile Bay to establish the cooperative Fairhope Colony. Gaston lived in Fairhope for the rest of his life, running the Fairhope Courier, serving as secretary of the FIA and its successor the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, and guiding the practical application of the single tax to the extent possible under the law.

Structural Description

The Gaston Building has a 40' frontage on Fairhope Avenue and is made of red brick veneer with a recessed central entry bay with three doors. The east door opens to the FSTC library, the west door

to the FSTC office, while the front door opens to steps to the upstairs archive and leased rooms. The front second story has a balcony that was added in 1998.



15-Bank of Fairhope 1927

The Bank of Fairhope, 396 Fairhope Avenue, is the building most identified with Fairhope and one of the first on the National Register of Historic Places. Built on the site of the earlier frame

Nelson Rockwell Ice Cream Parlor, it is one of the very few buildings in Fairhope designed by an architect, Mobile's William March, and built by Marmaduke Dyson in 1927. It was built first for the Bank of Fairhope, and was the only bank in Baldwin County, AL to survive the Crash and Depression. It was later occupied by the Mobile Press-Register newspaper, and since the 1990's, has housed the Christmas Shop.

The Bank of Fairhope is a two-story Neoclassical Revival building with stucco over tile block, scored on the façade to resemble stone. It is deeply recessed in the front with a tiled-floored loggia porch fronted by two Tuscan columns. The symmetrical façade contains double paneled and glass entry doors flanked by plate show windows. The entry is in a concrete surround with a central cartouche, above which is a round metal clock. Interior stamped tile ceiling on the first floor is intact.



**16-Fairhope Pharmacy Building
1916**

"You go to the corner where Fairhope Pharmacy is ..." is how locals have been giving directions in downtown Fairhope for over a century. Located on the corner of Fairhope Avenue and Section

Street, a two-story wooden structure was first built in 1900 by Dr. Clarence L. Mershon, Sr. to house a dispensing pharmacy on the street floor and doctors' offices above. The wooden structure was replaced by Dr. Mershon in 1916 with a building constructed of white sand cement blocks. Later sundries and a soda fountain were added. Fairhope Pharmacy bears the second oldest commercial name in Fairhope. The current owners, the Barnhill family, have owned the business since 1959. Today it is a pharmacy and gift shop.

Alabama Centennial Retailer Award

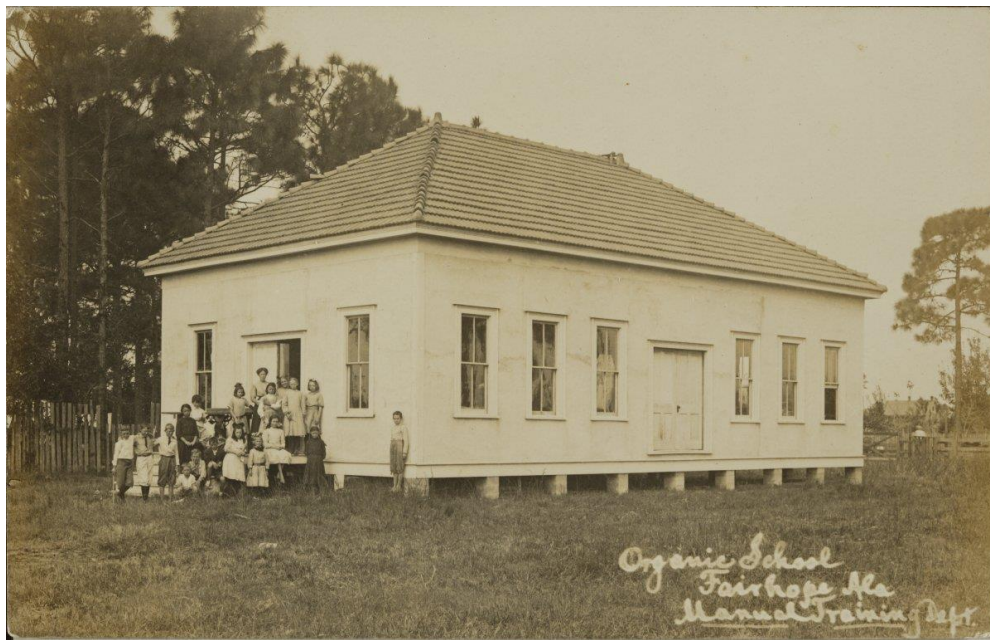
A framed citation, on display near the prescription counter, was presented in 2017 by the Alabama Retail Association to honor this landmark business for over a century of service to the community. Fairhope Pharmacy is one of the oldest continuously operating drug stores in Alabama.

Dr. Clarence L. Mershon Sr. (1870-1925) was in medical school when his parents joined the original 28 founders of Fairhope. In 1898, as soon as he finished his degree, he joined them in Fairhope and opened his practice on Fairhope Avenue. It was a small two-room wooden building where he treated patients in one room and dispensed medicines in the other. As the city and his practice grew, he hired a pharmacist and opened the Fairhope Pharmacy in 1900. He assumed the responsibilities of the physician in charge when he, along with three other doctors, opened the Fairhope Sanitarium for the treatment of acute and chronic diseases in 1908. He married Bertha Maye Bowers and had three children. When he died in 1925, he was buried in the Colony Cemetery.

Structural Description

This structure is a two-story commercial building about 40' frontage by 50' deep and is a combination of scored, smooth stucco and concrete block all painted white. The distinctive curved parapet has been rebuilt. The windows have been replaced with anodized

aluminum reproductions of the earlier multi-pane sash and storefront window with overlights. The Section Street sidewall painting was retained. The building is a fine example of early 20th century commercial architecture build by Marmaduke Dyson. The business established by Dr. C. L. Mershon, Sr. was originally housed in a frame building which no longer exists. Although some changes to the upstairs windows are non-historic, the restored masonry makes this building a historic contributing property.



**17-Manual Training Building / Dahlgren Hall
1912**

The Manual Training Building, now called Dahlgren Hall, was built in 1912 on a ten-acre site for the Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education. The name changed in 1981 when Harold Dahlgren donated \$70,000 to retool the shop and restore the old high school. This site is now home to Coastal Alabama Community College.

One of the two original buildings, the Manual Training building was considered by Marietta Johnson as the most attractive and most important building. She said it was favored by the students, young and old, because of the hands-on activities found inside. There were three rooms: one for clay; one for weaving, metalworking, color, and leather; and a still larger room for wood-working. She described the rooms as light, airy, and comfortable. Every child in the elementary school spent two periods daily in the shop. Work in the craft room and shop continued in the high school with even more enthusiasm.

Marietta was overjoyed when she walked into Dahlgren Hall and saw children happily occupied at self-initiated tasks. Jewelry, including class rings with precious stones inset, were designed and created in the metal-working room. Vases made in the pottery section can still be seen today at the Fairhope Museum and Marietta Johnson Museum. Furniture and wood crafts were built in the wood shop room.

Although the actual school and campus are now located on Pecan Street south of the Coastal Alabama campus, students enrolled in the Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education in 2022 are still working clay in a pottery room and building toys and crafts in the wood shop. Bird feeders and blue bird houses built by students dot the beautiful campus.

Description

Dahlgren Hall represents the modest architectural effort applied to school buildings in Fairhope's egalitarian and resource-poor environment. It was originally constructed as a simple one-room structure with a hipped roof. Stucco was applied to the exterior and was referred to as "Single-Tax Stucco." Interior walls were covered with beaded board and wainscoting. Dahlgren Hall has retained its integrity with minor alterations. A tile roof now protects the building. Front and rear shed porches have been

added. The main entrance still uses the original two doors flanked by three 2/2 windows on either side.



18-The Bell Building 1904

The single taxers provided the first school for students in 1895. It was located downtown on the corner of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street. Students of single taxers were charged fifty cents and others a dollar. The initial enrollment was 26. In 1904, with the population of Fairhope eclipsing 400, a new school building

was constructed, "with two splendidly lighted rooms and a hall ten feet wide through the middle." (*Fairhope Courier*, 2/3/05). Because of its belfry, the school became known popularly as the Bell Building.

Education in Fairhope was changed forever with the arrival of Marietta Johnson in 1902. A native of Minnesota and graduate of St. Cloud Normal School, Johnson assumed duties as a teacher in Fairhope. Her philosophy had been profoundly affected by several books which stressed the education of the whole child: body, mind, and spirit. Called "Organic Education," this approach was used by Johnson beginning in 1907. Her school, located in the home of Samuel and Lydia Comings and known as the Gables, was free to locals and distinguished by the lack of formal academic strictures. By 1908 there were 50 students.

In 1910 the Bell Building was purchased for the Organic School, and soon a ten-acre campus was provided by the Single-Tax Colony on the southeast corner of Fairhope Avenue and Bancroft. "Six women were the incorporators: Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Clara M. Gaston, Mrs. L. A. Powell, Mrs. Minnie Brown, Mrs. D. K. Bancroft, and me," wrote Lydia J. Newcomb Comings. Initially it was called Comings Memorial College of Organic Education after the school's benefactors. The name was shortened to School of Organic Education, and the school began attracting boarding students from other areas of the country.

A proponent of a unique philosophy of progressive education, and a contemporary of Rudolf Steiner and Maria Montessori, Marietta Johnson created a school that had no examinations, no homework, and no possibility that a child would fail. The school was a laboratory for ideas that were considered radical at the time, but have become more valid with each passing decade. Mrs. Johnson was one of the first to advocate the prolongation of childhood - a period of intense, natural education - so that the desire to learn would extend to the whole of life. She also believed that physical

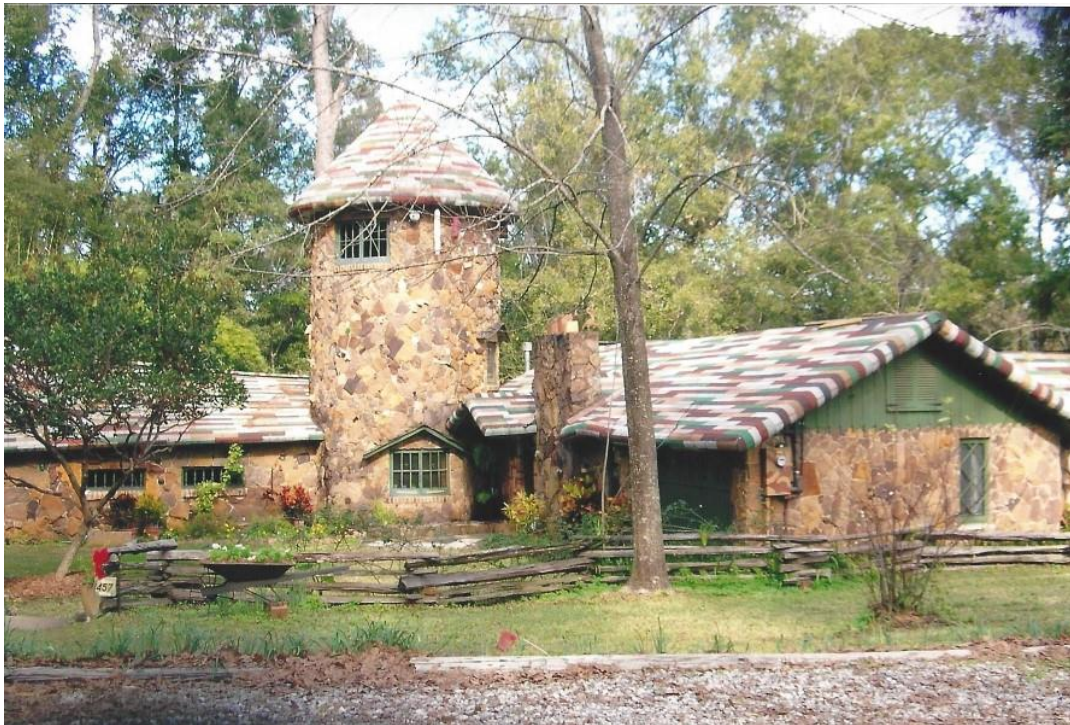
education should take the form of dancing and creative games, and often said, "the greatest minds are those able to use the spirit of play in their work."

Johnson's school received enthusiastic praise from all over the country. John Dewey profiled it in his *Schools of Tomorrow* (1913). Together with *The Fairhope Courier*, the Organic School became closely identified with the Single-Tax experiment.

In 1986, the city of Fairhope purchased the school campus and buildings.

The Marietta Johnson School, including the bell in the belfry, was moved to an eight-acre plot of land on Pecan Street where it continues in its educational roots.

The Bell Building downtown became the home of the Fairhope Historical Museum from 1992 to 2008. Today the building continues in its educational roots. Art classes are held in the original building. The Marietta Johnson Museum is housed in the rear addition and is open by appointment.



19-Sheldon Castle 1946

The tale of Fairhope's Story Book Castles begins with Craig Sheldon and his wife Annie "Butch" Sheldon. Craig was a world class sculptor, a master carpenter, writer, environmentalist, and WWII

Marine. Annie "Butch" Sheldon was a teacher and founding member of Theatre 98 and Thomas Hospital Auxiliary.

The structure is a testament to what the imagination can create within a strict budget.

In 1946 the young couple began building a garage, workshop, and laundry room. They had planned to build a Mexican-style house on the west end of the lot, but grew tired of the small apartment they were renting at Whittier Hall on Magnolia Avenue in Fairhope, so the family moved into the shell, which had no partition walls. The garage became a bedroom and hence has the only wood exterior wall in the house. Its rippled, stained-glass panels were removed in the summer to allow the cool breezes in. There were cool breezes in those days because the lot was more heavily-shaded and the gully was less overgrown. The "shop" became the living and dining room, and the "laundry" became the kitchen.

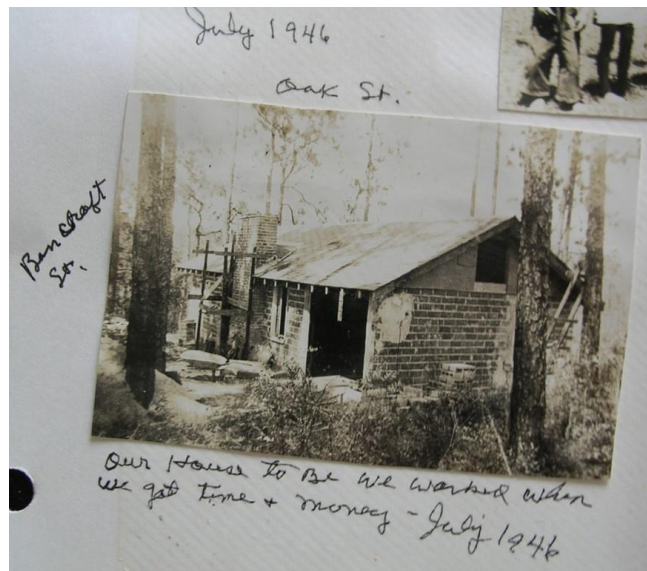
The house was built of Clay City tile. Mr. Sheldon covered the tile with Mobile Bay stone, first using the stone Mrs. Sheldon had hand-carried up the bluff to line her flowerbeds. He embellished the stone with old tools, Civil War shrapnel, cookware, bottles and more.

The rolled roof design resulted from his World War II experiences in the South Pacific. Being in the construction business, he would bring home shingles left over from various jobs. The random assortment of colors produced the patchwork-quilt design.

The tower was built in the 1950s with the help of his young son, Craig, Jr. (then called Mac). Mr. Sheldon had always dreamed of building a round room, and in this tower he constructed three of them. The first two allowed Mac and his sister, Suzan Megrez, to have their own rooms. The top room, on the third floor, was Mr. Sheldon's office where he wrote plays and a satirical newspaper column for the Fairhope Courier, "Knee Deep in Fly Creek." The conical roof was added later, after many nights of sleeping under the stars. Eventually it became Mac's room. Years later both

daughters threw their wedding bouquets from the window of this room.

Tourists, locals, families and friends are welcome to walk down the front drive and the front yards. Signs are posted with guidelines for guests to follow. The Storybook Castles are a wonderful setting for photo shoots for special occasions, and tours for large groups are also available.





20-Mosher Castle 1983

Mosher Castle is hand built with incredible attention to detail by artist and owner Dean Mosher. It serves as both home and studio for Dean and his wife Pagan Sheldon Mosher. It began when a run-down structure was purchased in 1983. It now has its own unique tower, an ornate bridge, ponds, drawbridge, and moat. On top of a turret, Hendrix the Dragon is looking over Excalibur.

Many of the artistic features of the Sheldon Castle, seen across the drive, inspired the building of Mosher Castle. Both the

exterior and the interior are largely made of local materials. The stone facing is indigenous to the area, as is the underlying wall tile. Interior trim is from trees felled on the site. In among the stones are pieces of glass and pottery, as well as objects from around the world, including the *Great Wall of China* and the *Berlin Wall*.

The artist has been building his studio-castle home for nearly 40 years while raising his family and pursuing his art. Much of Dean's construction knowledge was acquired working with his late father-in-law Craig Sheldon, master carpenter, mason, and woodcarver. Dean's wife, Pagan, the daughter of Craig, is a retired professional dancer, teacher, and studio owner. They married in 1978.

Every day, tourists, locals, families, and friends are welcome to walk down the front drive and the front yards. Signs are posted with guidelines asking guests to follow.

The Storybook Castles are a wonderful setting for photo shoots for special occasions, and tours for large groups are available.

Dean Mosher, castle designer and builder, is an internationally known historical artist with paintings in national parks, major universities, and the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum on the Mall in D.C. He is also known for his lectures that bring history to life and can be booked for lectures locally and nationally.



**21-Walker's Furniture Store, 311 Fairhope Avenue
(Not on Map and No Building Plaque)
1921**

By September 1922 the furniture store was no longer in business and the building was occupied by Tony Klumpp. Mr. Klumpp used the upstairs as living quarters and the downstairs as a showroom for automobiles from his Chevrolet dealership.

In 1923, a bakery and restaurant, which had been doing business inside the People's Cooperative Store next door, reopened in the Walker Building as the Cooperative Lunchroom. Over the years the building has housed a variety of restaurants, as well as a paint store, plant shop and dance studio. At present, it has again become a restaurant, pub, and downtown nightspot.

H. S. Walker

H. S. Walker, the "hustling house fitter" from Mobile owned several lots and a summer home on the bay in Fairhope. For decades he and his family summered in Fairhope and, at other times of the year, he came over from Mobile to manage his rental properties. H. S. Walker enjoyed many extended family ties and a wide circle of friends in the Fairhope community.

Structural Description

The Walker Building, 311 Fairhope Avenue, circa 1921. Two-story commercial building, 25' frontage; Dyson block construction, still unpainted. Three bay's downstairs defined by masonry piers, containing three sets of French doors with louvered vent over-panels; upstairs with central double doors flanked by narrower sash windows. Projecting metal balcony on metal poles with shed canvas awning above (all a later addition); flat parapet; end-exposed brick chimney flu, east side.