

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received JAN 18 1985  
date entered FEB 14 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic First United Methodist Church

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 1800 3rd Avenue

NA not for publication

city, town Jasper

NA vicinity of

Congressional District 4

state Alabama

code 01

county Walker

code 127

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Trustees, First United Methodist Church

street & number 1800 3rd Avenue

city, town Jasper

NA vicinity of

state Alabama

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Walker County Courthouse

street & number Office of Probate Judge and Tax Assessor

city, town Jasper

state Alabama

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Alabama Inventory

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1970-present

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery

state Alabama

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located at the southwest corner of 3rd Avenue and 18th Street, the First United Methodist Church is situated on the edge of the old Jasper business district a short distance north of the town square. The church is a masonry structure resting on a high basement and faced with white Georgia marble. In plan it is basically rectangular, with projecting pavilions at the north, east, and south elevations. The centrally placed, three-bay pavilions on the north and east sides of the building are each fronted by a pedimented hexastyle portico of the Ionic order. Each column is composed of a single monolithic piece of marble, topped by Scamozzi capitals.

The off-center pavilion which breaks from the south or rear wall of the church contains the choir area of the sanctuary. Small flat-roofed extensions in the reentrant angles to either side of this rear pavilion house antechambers adjoining the choir loft. The roof of each extension is enclosed by a marble balustrade.

A trio of arched windows with projecting keystones flanks the porticoed north pavilion, the main entrance to the church, while the east pavilion and portico are flanked by a single arched window.

A flight of fourteen marble steps rises between broad parapets to each of the porticoes. The molded coping which caps these parapets is visually carried around the entire building as a watertable just above the basement bays. Correspondingly, the entablature of each portico is also continued around the church as the most prominent relief feature. The frieze of this entablature is embellished only by bezants positioned above the capital of each column and at the corners of the building. Accentuating the tympanum of the two porticoes is a single blind rondel of rose-colored marble.

The shallow hipped roof which covers the church is composed of terra cotta tile and is surmounted by a twelve foot octagonal cupola with eight arched openings. The conical roof of the cupola itself is likewise tiled and topped by a large cross.

Three double doors lead from each portico into the shallow narthexes opening into the main worship area. Belying the external symmetry of the north or main elevation, classrooms and parish offices lie behind the three large windows to the west side of the north portico while the sanctuary occupies the remaining two-thirds of the building. Thus the main narthex opens into the sanctuary not on axis, but at the northwest corner. The secondary narthex, however, opens axially into the eastern side of the worship area. It is an odd arrangement, perhaps without parallel in the state. Stairs lead from each narthex to the galleries which surround the nave on three sides.

The sanctuary itself is a large square audience room with a shallow recess on the south for the choir & organ. The nave and galleries seat approximately 400 people. Three rows of straight pews face the raised pulpit dais and choir loft behind. Directly beneath the pulpit is the small Communion table or altar, the focal point for a raised chancel area which is enclosed by a paneled kneeling rail for communicants. Marble candlestands at each side of the altar area were gifts from the estate of the late Senator John Hollis Bankhead, Jr. The American flag in one corner of the nave was likewise willed to the church by the Honorable William Brockman Bankhead and was displayed in the U. S. House of Representatives when Bankhead served as Speaker.

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

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The paneled pilasters which surround the room, flanking the recessed galleries and choir loft, are, like the gallery rails and other trim in the sanctuary, fashioned of Honduran mahogany. Memorial stained-glass, some original and some replaced after the church sustained tornado damage in 1974, fills each window.

The most striking feature of the interior, however, is the art glass dome, 34 feet in diameter and nine feet high, which illuminates the sanctuary from above. It is built in 109 sections and contains, in all, more than 30,000 pieces of glass. Invisible from the outside of the church, the dome is artificially lighted from behind by an elaborate series of electric bulbs. The glazing of the dome arches up from a broad, denticulated entablature of mahogany and beyond a geometrically-patterned border, depicts angels and cherubs floating in ethereal space. Needlepoint kneeling cushions installed at the altar rail in 1972 repeat the colors and some of the motifs of the art-glass in the dome.

Except for the repairs necessitated in the wake of the 1974 tornado, the sanctuary has remained structurally unchanged since the 1920s.

The adjoining office and classroom space, as well as the basement parish hall, kitchen, and Sunday School area, were renovated in 1975 according to plans developed by Henry Sprott Long & Associates, Inc., of Birmingham. At that time, a small vestibule and steps were also constructed at the rear (south) of the church, west of the sanctuary area. The main doors of the church, destroyed by the tornado, were also replaced. These modifications, however, have done little to disturb the salient architectural qualities of the building.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1921 **Builder/Architect** unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Criterion C - Architecture

The First United Methodist Church of Jasper is among Alabama's most outstanding examples of beaux arts neoclassicism as interpreted for an ecclesiastical structure. Although smaller in scale than such contemporaries as Birmingham's Southside Baptist (1911) and Temple Bethel-el (1913), or the First Baptist Church of Mobile (1908), the design of the Jasper church is equally sophisticated and its finish second to none. Moreover, both outside and in, the church has preserved to a remarkable degree its early 20th century character. The church is likewise an architectural symbol of Jasper's boom years as a center of the mining industry in western Alabama, suggesting the wealth and ambition of the "evangelical aristocracy" which then dominated the economic and social life of the town.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Owens, Thomas M. History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography, 1921.  
Taggart, Mrs. J. K. (Charlotte Collins) "Historical Highlights of The First United Methodist Church, Jasper, AL." 1976.  
Oral Interview, AHC Staff, 1984.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 0.44 acres

Quadrangle name Jasper

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	4	7	4	2	9	0	3	7	4	3	5	2	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See red line on attached sketch map.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shirley Qualls and Bob Gamble

organization Alabama Historical Commission

date October 4, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street

telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery

state Alabama

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12/14/84

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 2-14-85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

## History

### First United Methodist Church, Jasper

This is the fifth house of worship for Jasper's oldest religious congregation. The original meetinghouse was a log structure--formerly used as a community school, assembly hall, and church--which was deeded to the Methodists on June 14, 1833. This structure continued to serve the Methodist congregation for a quarter of a century until 1858 or 1859, when a frame building was erected on the present site, largely through the efforts and generosity of one churchmember, Mrs. Amanda Savage. On March 27, 1865, this building, along with the nearby Walker County Courthouse and Masonic hall, was burned by a detachment of Michigan soldiers from the command of General James Wilson.

After the Civil War the Methodists joined with the Masons in erecting another structure to house both groups. This frame building, measuring 32 x 42 feet, served the congregation until a brick High Victorian Gothic style structure, with steeple, was begun in 1888.

During the following two decades, Jasper prospered as development of the mineral and timber resources of north central Alabama began in earnest. Under the leadership of the Rev. Mr. J. L. Morris, plans were conceived for the present structure during these boom years, and in 1912 a building fund was authorized. Among those serving on the building committee were several members of Jasper's industrial elite, including Senator John Hollis Bankhead, founder of Alabama's Bankhead political dynasty and grandfather of actress Tallulah Bankhead.

Oddly enough, church records and contemporary newspapers have both failed to disclose the name of the building's architect. William Leslie Welton, a leading Birmingham practitioner of the beaux arts at this period, has been suggested as one possibility. It has also been postulated that the Reverend William Winfield Scott, the gifted pastor who succeeded Mr. Morris and initiated construction of the building, may have been largely his own architect.

The design itself reflects the influence of contemporary church-related architectural periodicals. One of these, a Catalog of Plans of Down to Date Twentieth Century Churches published by the Board of Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1912, contains two schemes which conform closely to the Jasper design. These schemes, designs number 58 and 59, were prepared by George Kramer of Akron and New York, a foremost Methodist architect. It is not beyond reason that Kramer's designs, as presented through the church publication, provided the seminal ideas for the Jasper structure and obviated the necessity for direct involvement by a local architect.

Lycurgus Breckinridge Musgrove, a Jasper banker and businessman whose mother was a leading member of the church, played a major part in the completion of the new building. He contributed two dollars for every one dollar raised by other means, and donated the marble used in the construction, as well as the pipe organ and art glass interior dome. The dome was a memorial to his mother and bears the inscription "Mother Musgrove," worked out in stained glass. The dome was designed by A. Leyendecker of the St. Joseph Art Glass Company in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Work on the building was interrupted by the First World War. On November 3, 1921, however, the finished church was dedicated free of debt.

## History

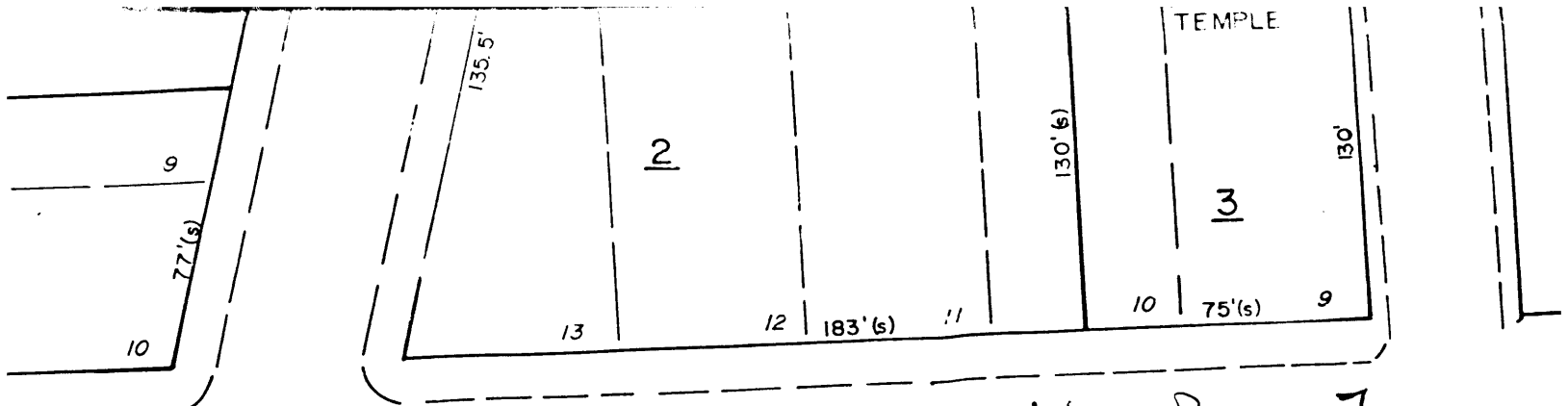
First United Methodist Church, Jasper

Page 2

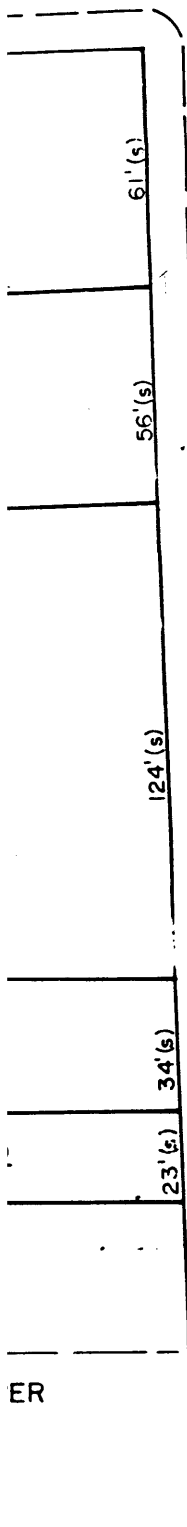
A year earlier, in March of 1920, Senator John Hollis Bankhead had been buried from the new building. And twenty years later, on September 17, 1940, his son, the Honorable William Brockman Bankhead, Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives, was also buried from the church. Attending the funeral were President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and Labor Secretary Frances Perkins. A special wooden ramp was constructed to the portico of the church for the invalid President, so that the official automobile could be driven directly to the main door. A bronze plaque today marks the pew inside the church occupied by President Roosevelt and the members of his cabinet. When Senator John Hollis Bankhead II, the third member of the Bankhead dynasty, died six years later, funeral services were once more held in the church, on June 14, 1946. In attendance again were a number of Washington notables, including Senator Claude Pepper of Florida.

On April 3, 1974, at eight in the evening, downtown Jasper was struck by a severe tornado. The cupola atop the church was badly damaged, the cross blown away, and portions of the roof demolished. The main doors to the sanctuary were also ripped apart and 34 of 38 stained glass memorial windows damaged or destroyed. There was, in addition, extensive water damage inside the building. Miraculously, the art glass dome escaped unscathed.

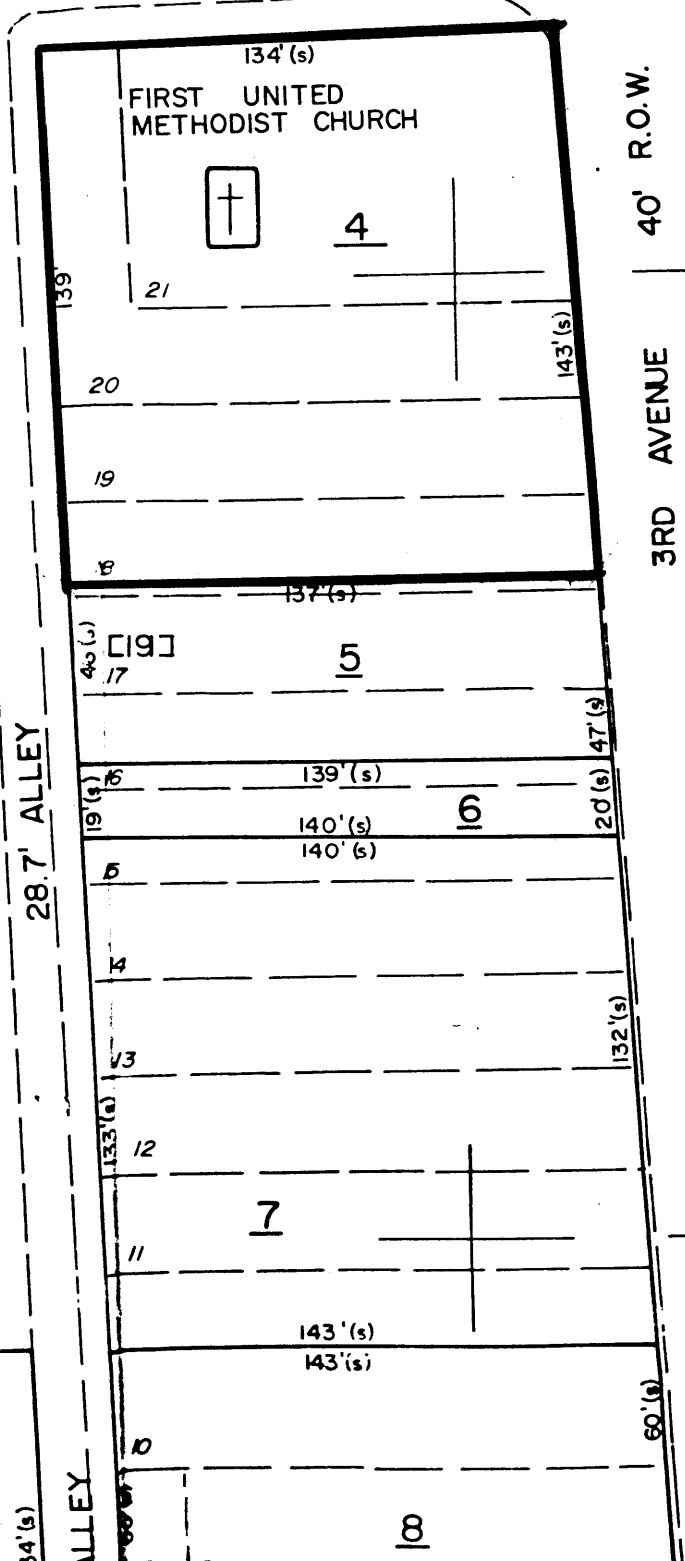
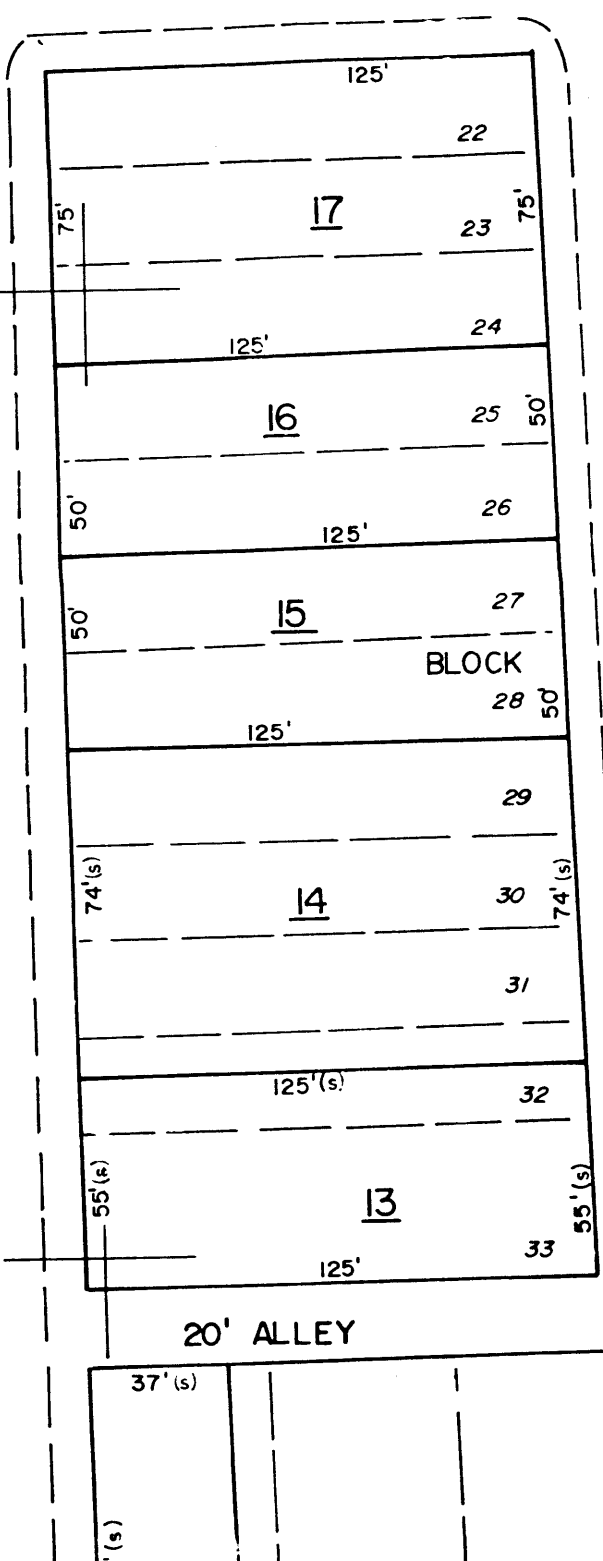
Subsequent repair and renovation work began in 1975 and was completed the following year. Replacement stained glass windows have attempted to respect the character of surviving original windows. Among the latter are memorials to several prominent Walker County citizens, including Peyton Norvell, a Virginia-born lawyer and Jasper businessman, members of the Savage family, and Franklin Asbury Gamble, longtime probate judge of Walker County.



Section 16 - T. 14 - Range 7



4TH AVENUE 60' R.O.W.



3RD AVENUE 40' R.O.W.

ER