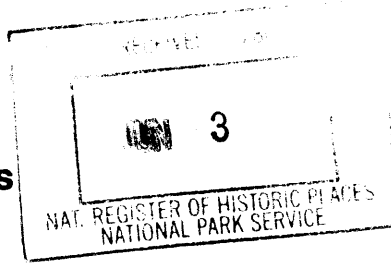


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



Ala. Historical Commission

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Johnson, Axil, House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 751 Edwards Street

N/A
 not for publication

city or town Fairhope

vicinity

state AL

code AL

county Baldwin

code 003

zip code 36532

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title

5/30/97
Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

7/3/97

Johnson, Axil, House
Name of Property

Baldwin Co., Al
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Craftsman

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STUCCO

walls STUCCO

roof METAL/tin

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See attachment

orig

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

N/A

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1940

Significant Dates

1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Axil Johnson

Narrative Statement of Significance See attachment

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Mobile Historic Development Commission

Johnson, Axil, House
Name of Property

Baldwin County, Alabama
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 11 6 4 1 4 6 1 2 1 0 3 3 7 7 3 8 0
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description See attachment
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification See attachment
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title John Sledge/Architectural Historian and Trina Binkley/AHC Reviewer
Organization Mobile Historic Development Commission date 15 June 1996
street & number P.O. Box 1827 telephone (334)434-7281
city or town Mobile state Al zip code 36633

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Ken and Julia Summerlin
street & number 751 Edwards Street telephone (334)928-3425
city or town Fairhope state Al zip code 36532

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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OMB No. 1024-0018

JAN 21 1997

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Ala. Historical Commission

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Johnson, Axil, House
name of property
Baldwin County, Alabama
county and State

7. Narrative Description

The Johnson House sits on a large, informally landscaped lot at the northeast corner of Edwards Street and Ingleside Avenue in Fairhope, Alabama. Fairhope is a community of about 10,000 inhabitants located on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay, opposite the city of Mobile. The lot is surrounded by a wire fence dating from the construction of the house in 1940. The fence is ornamented along Ingleside Avenue and Edwards Street by roses dating from the 1940s as well. The lot is shaded by a number of pecan trees and the present owners have landscaped the graveled drive and south elevation of the house with a variety of bushes. There is a swimming pool on the north side of the house, screened from the rest of the lot by a wooden lattice fence.

The Johnson House does not face either of the two streets, but rather is oriented east, facing across the block. The structure is a one and a half story stucco Craftsman style house. The walls of the house and the foundation consist of clay tile blocks, covered with stucco. These clay tile blocks were a common building material on the Eastern Shore. The clay was locally available at a number of sites, and has been used since the 18th century for pottery making and building purposes.

The front elevation of the Johnson House features an attached hip roof porch which covers the facade. The porch features square posts and a plain balustrade. The north half of the porch has been filled in as living space with clapboards and a pair of 6/6 windows. A pair of French doors lead inside. There is a gable roof with exposed rafters above and multi-light metal casement windows. The windows are paired with fixed transoms above and feature brick sills, which contrasts nicely with the smooth stucco wall covering. Attached to the north side of the facade is a one story, shed roof, two car garage with stucco walls and

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Johnson, Axil, House
name of property
Baldwin County, Alabama
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wooden garage doors that roll up into the ceiling. This originally served as a rental unit and garage for the owners and also dates from 1940.

The south elevation features three bays, the two forward ones on the eastern end stepped out from the wall. All windows are double multi-light metal casement. There is a gable dormer above (with exposed rafters), with a set of three casement windows and louvered vent above. The rear elevation features a pair of staggered gable roofs, one extending out approximately four feet from the main mass of the house. The first floor fenestration is identical on both the main and projecting elevations: two window openings each with double multipane casement windows with a six pane fixed transom above. The upper story gable end window on the projecting wall is a four pane single casement window. The upper story window on the main west elevation is a pair of multipaned casements.

There is one window in the first and upper floor of each gable. The north elevation includes a one and a half story cross gable with exterior stuccoed chimney and casement windows, nearly obscured by thick vegetative growth. The pool fronts this elevation. To the east of the pool is the rear elevation of the one story apartment and garage. Its stuccoed surface includes a small window and door with lights and shed roof shelter.

The exterior of the Johnson House maintains its integrity of location, style and design. Alterations are limited to the partially infilled porch, and the addition of shutters, c. 1983.

The interior of the Johnson House is in a remarkable state of preservation. As is typical of the craftsman style, the floorplan is informal, with the downstairs serving as living and dining space and master bedroom with the children's bedrooms located upstairs. The downstairs' walls and

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Johnson, Axil, House
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ceilings are stuccoed and hardwood floors are throughout, except for the bathroom which features the original tile floor and floor vent. The main living and dining area is situated in the front of the house and is separated by a broad open arch. A pair of French doors lead onto the porch and into the porch infill. The dining room includes built-in china displays. Original hardware is throughout. A pair of bedrooms is in the projecting area on the first floor. The kitchen is to the west of the dining room and has been remodeled. A straight partially open staircase in the center of the house leads upstairs where a narrow hall provides access to the upstairs bedrooms. The upstairs bedrooms have wooden board walls and ceilings in natural finish. There are no interior alterations worthy of note.

The interior of the one story garage apartment includes stuccoed walls and ceilings and a hardwood floor. The garage itself consists of concrete floor.

While no formal archaeological survey has been made on this property, the potential of subsurface remains is probably minimal.

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Baldwin County, Alabama

8. Statement of Significance

The Axil Johnson House is eligible under Criterion C for its association with the work of a locally significant master craftsman. Axil Johnson was the most prominent local craftsman in plastering and cement finishing working in Fairhope during the first half of the twentieth century. Johnson worked as a plaster and cement craftsman, and even as a builder, in Fairhope from his arrival in 1900 up to World War I and again after the Depression in the early 1940s following other endeavors. The building and design environment in Fairhope at this time was quite modest in size and styling and completely vernacular in overall design which corresponded with the philosophic beliefs of the colony (see Historic Resources of Fairhope, Alabama National Register Multiple Property Submission).

Using mostly indigenous materials (especially the local clays found in south Baldwin County), Johnson was among the few experienced builders and finishing craftsmen working in Fairhope. His well-trained skills are evident in his own house: the fine stuccoed surface of the exterior and the plastered interior walls and ceilings. This house, which Johnson constructed and finished for himself in 1940, was one of the largest homes in Fairhope to be constructed and included a separated apartment room to rent to tourists. As such the Axil Johnson House represents one of Johnson's last, if not his very last, building endeavors, signaling the end of a locally significant career as a stucco and plaster craftsman and an end of an era of craftsmanship in Fairhope.

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 5Johnson, Axil, House
Baldwin County, Alabama**Historical Summary**

Fairhope was founded in 1894 as a utopian colony by a group of mid-westerners. Prior to the founders' selection of the site of their town, there was little development along the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. Indeed, the site of Fairhope itself was an overgrown pine barren with a few squatters. The early Fairhoppers were guided by the Single Tax philosophy of Henry George. George's theory called for a single tax on land, freeing it up for the highest and best use. Residents would lease their land from the Single Tax Colony, and own their improvements. This arrangement was meant to stifle land speculation. (Alyea)

By early 1895 some two dozen settlers had arrived in Fairhope, so named because their experiment had a "fair hope" of success. The Single Taxers quickly acquired several hundred acres of land, much of it located along the bluffs overlooking the bay. One of their first actions was to set aside the choice bayfront property for the community, in the belief that no individual had the right to monopolize such a scarce resource. (Alyea)

As the town slowly grew and developed, a variety of people sympathetic with the principles of the Single Tax moved in. Many of these people were mid-westerners who had followed the progress of the utopian experiment in a variety of big city dailies. By the turn of the century Fairhope had about four hundred residents. Because the soil at the site was marginal and unsuited to extensive agriculture, many people rented out rooms to Mobilians and other out of towners seeking a summer resort or escape from northern winters. (Alyea)

Around 1900 a man named Axil Johnson moved to Fairhope from the midwest. Johnson was of Swedish ancestry and a

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committed Single Taxer. His presence promised to be of practical value to the community since he was a skilled plasterer and cement finisher. Johnson paired up with Marmaduke Dyson, an English immigrant and local builder of some repute. Together, Johnson and Dyson had a hand in numerous local buildings, including the Masonic Hall (1911) on South Section Street and a number of modest houses typical of Fairhope. The partnership would last until World War I. (Dyson Interview)

In partnership with Dyson, and on his own, Johnson worked as a small time builder in an informal setting. Most of the architecture in Fairhope was of a vernacular nature, informed by occasional stylistic trends. Most builders worked without the benefit of plans and specifications. It was not uncommon for the scheme to be in the builder's head only. Despite this, certain builders developed their distinctive "styles" still recognizable as their work. Such was the case with Johnson's skill as a plasterer and stucco man.

During the war years Johnson struck out on his own, and tried a variety of endeavors. He experimented with farming, but failed to make much of a living. It was as a builder that Axil Johnson was most competent. Though Johnson was a committed Single Taxer, colony lots were in limited supply after World War I. Indeed, during the 1940s there were none. Therefore Johnson purchased a deeded lot just east of downtown Fairhope in 1940 and began construction of a new one and a half story house. The area had been sparsely settled up to that time. There were a scattering of houses on large lots and there was even a pear canning plant on Ingleside Avenue nearby. (Dyson Interview, Rowe Interview, Fairhope City Directory) With its use of local materials, unenclosed eave overhang, exposed roof rafters, stucco finish, casement windows and free, open interior plan, the Johnson House is typical of the Craftsman style as it existed in Fairhope. Stucco was widely used in the community from the 1920s to the 1940s, and was even referred to as "Single-Tax Stucco." The Johnson House is somewhat

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Johnson, Axil House
Baldwin County, Alabama

plainer than earlier examples of the style, for instance it lacks knee braces in the gables which are ubiquitous in examples from the 1920s. In its clean simplicity the Johnson House represents the fading of the Craftsman philosophy into a less studied, modern form. Indeed, the Johnson House is one of the last Craftsman style houses constructed in Fairhope.

Fairhope fared quite well during the teens, twenties and thirties. During the Depression only two banks in Baldwin County stayed in business, one of these was in Fairhope. The community continued to attract reform minded individuals, though in fewer numbers than in former days. Many located in Fairhope simply because it was a nice place to be. Increased land speculation during the 1920s put some pressure on the Single Tax idea, but it and the community did not succumb to development schemes. (Alyea)

By the time Johnson built his house, downtown Fairhope was prosperous, and more people were building out on land to the east of downtown, like Johnson. Johnson's house was an impressive display of his specialized building skills. The building consisted of stuccoed clay tile blocks and a smoothly finished interior with an open archway between the dining and living rooms. As noted earlier, the clay tile blocks were a common building material on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. A wide vein of clay runs from Montrose on the bay to the Fish River, several miles inland. This vein has been exploited by man since prehistoric times. From the 18th century a number of potteries were established in Daphne and Montrose, and a series of kilns was established on the Fish River during the late 19th century. Known as Clay City, these kilns produced clay building blocks for the area. The blocks were made in molds and fired to hardness. Each block looked rather like a concrete block, though smaller, with hollow spaces. This dead air mass was thought to be an advantage for building in the hot climate. It was thought that it would keep the home warm in winter and cool in summer. (Dyson Interview)

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Baldwin County, Alabama

Johnson's lot was a generous 140x170 feet, fenced and bordered with rose bushes. In an effort to supplement his income during retirement, Johnson included an off-set one story shed roof wing and garage with his house which he and his wife rented out. This was a common practice in Fairhope. (Rowe Interview)

From 1942 to 1954 Johnson served as Superintendent of Lands and Highways for the Single Tax Corporation and was listed in the city directory as living at 2401 Hedge Villa Place. Today the house bears the address of 751 Edwards Street. The Johnson's lived in the house until about 1960. The present owners purchased it in 1985. (Rowe Interview, Fairhope City Directory)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Paul E. and Blanche R. Alyea. Fairhope, 1894-1954: The Story of a Single Tax Colony. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press. 1956.

Fairhope City Directory, 1942.

Interview, Sam Dyson, 15 May 1996.

Interview, Gail Rowe, 15 May 1996.

Interview, Julia Summerlin, 11 May 1996.

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Johnson, Axil, House
name of property
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10. Verbal Boundary Description

The Axil Johnson House is located at 751 Edwards Street in Fairhope, Baldwin County, Alabama as represented as lots 7,8,9, Block 2, Hedge Villa Place, Fairhope.

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries contain all of the extant historic property associated with the Axil Johnson House.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Johnson, Axil House
name of property
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Photographic Log

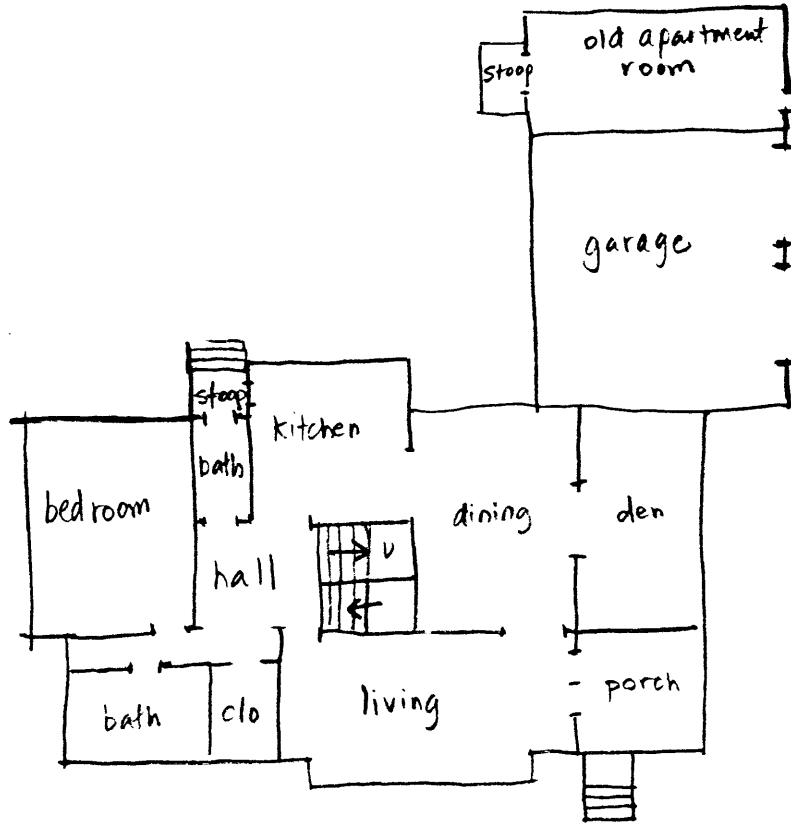
Johnson House
751 Edwards Street
Fairhope, Baldwin County, Alabama
John Sledge, photographer
11 May 1996
MHDC negative file #MB 228

1. Facade, camera facing W.
2. General, camera facing NE.
3. Rear, camera facing E.
4. North elevation, camera facing S.
5. Interior, first floor, living room, camera facing E.
6. First floor bath, camera facing N.
7. Upstairs hall, camera facing E.
8. Upstairs bedroom, camera facing S.

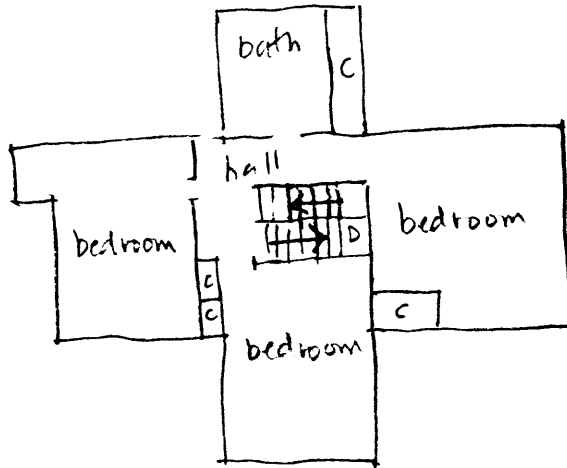
Axil Johnson House, Fairhope
Baldwin County, Alabama

Floor Plans:

First Floor



Second Floor



not to scale



Johnson, Arvil House, Fairhope
Baldwin County, Alabama

751 Edwards Ave.

