

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 16 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheet N/A not for publication
city, town Fort Payne N/A vicinity
state Alabama code AL county DeKalb code 049 zip code 35967

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>4</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 2

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official [Signature] Date 3/6/89
Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:)

Amy Schlager 4/21/89

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

commerce/trade: businessrecreation & culture: theatrelandscape: parktransportation/rail-related

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

commerce/trade: specialty storerecreation & culture: theatrelandscape: parkvacant/not in use**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

late Victorian CommercialRomanesque

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brickwalls brickstoneroof asphalt

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District is located in the northeastern section of Alabama, the most mountainous area of the state. Situated in a valley, Fort Payne is bounded on the northwest by Sand Mountain and on the southeast by Lookout Mountain. Fort Payne is laid out in a gridiron plan with the main streets running northeast by southwest, following the natural contour of the valley.

The district consists of three blocks of Commerce Street at the southeastern edge of Fort Payne's central business district and extends one block to include a railroad depot on 5th Street, Northeast. The district represents the finest examples of late nineteenth century architecture in Fort Payne, including four commercial buildings, a Romanesque Revival railroad depot, and a turn-of-the-century planned park. The district clearly reflects Fort Payne's economic boom of 1888 through 1891 that was stimulated by rapid speculation of the area's rich mineral deposits.

The four contributing commercial buildings located in the district were all built in c.1889. Most all of the commercial buildings are two stories in height with the exception of the three-story Opera House (inventory number 5). All of the buildings are constructed in brick, and the Purdy Building (inventory number 3) has stone window surrounds and stone storefront. The Victorian decorative details include tall, slender windows with elaborate hoods; corbelled brick and cast-iron cornices; and original storefronts. The Fort Payne Opera House was added to the National Register of Historic Places on 04/28/70.

The city park is located in the center of the district and is bounded on the northwest by Gault Avenue, on the northeast by 5th street, on the southwest by 4th street, and on the southeast by the railroad line. The city park was planned and laid out in c.1889 and has been retained as a park. During the early twentieth century the light fixtures were added and the Civil War Memorial was moved from its original location in front of the now demolished county court house.

Located to the southeast of the city park is the Alabama Great Southern Railroad Depot. The depot is a sandstone structure designed in the Romanesque Revival style in 1890-1891. The depot was added to the National Register of Historic Places on 09/10/71.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

architecture

industry

Period of Significance

1889 - 1893

Significant Dates

1889

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

NA

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Criterion A and C: Industry and Architecture

The Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District is locally significant as Fort Payne's best collection of late nineteenth-century Victorian architecture and landscaped park associated with the city's industrial boom of the late 1880s. All of the historic resources in the historic district were built between 1889 and 1891 during a short period of economic prosperity created by the speculative boom of the iron industry. The elaborate architectural details that are found in the district include ornamental hoods over the windows, elaborate brick corbelling, ashlar stone window surrounds, and cast-iron pilasters and cornices. These highly ornate buildings and the planned park were built as symbols of the town's prosperity and wealth. Most of the buildings and the park were built by the Fort Payne Coal and Iron Company to enhance the appearance of Fort Payne to attract New England investors. The speculative boom lasted under four years, and only a few commercial buildings were built. The historic district contains the best examples of commercial and civic buildings associated with the boom.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Landmarks, a Pictorial History of DeKalb Co., AL
Fort Payne: Landmarks of DeKalb Co., Inc., 1971
- The DeKalb Legend, Volume 4, 1975-1976
Fort Payne: Landmarks of DeKalb Co., Inc., 1976
- The DeKalb Legend, Volume 5, 1977-1978
Fort Payne: Landmarks of DeKalb Co., Inc., 1978
- Fort Payne, Alabama, Illustrated, Feb. 1889-Aug. 1890
Fort Payne: Landmarks of DeKalb Co., Inc., 1970
- A Preservation Plan for Fort Payne, AL
Murfreesboro, Tenn. Historic Preservation Program
Middle Tennessee State University, 1984
- Metzger, A. B.
The History of Fort Payne 1880-1900
Auburn, AL 1938 Thesis

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property $\frac{+}{-}$ 8

UTM References

A

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

C

1	6
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6	1	7	6	2	0
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3	8	1	1	7	8	0
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B

1	6
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6	1	7	7	4	0
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3	8	1	1	9	7	0
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Zone Easting Northing

D

1	6
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6	1	7	4	8	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	6	1	1	8	4	0
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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District is shown on the accompanying map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the strongest concentration of historic properties in the Fort Payne commercial area that is associated with the 1889-1891 economic boom.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Steven M. Kay/Cultural Resources Coordinator

organization Alabama Historical Commission date January 1989

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama zip code 36130

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INCLUSIVE STREET NUMBERS

322, 324 Gault Avenue, North

400 block, odd Gault Avenue, North

502 - 518, even Gault Avenue, North

** 5th Street, Northeast

Railroad depot corner of 5th St. NE and railroad tracks

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The district has retained its integrity as a late nineteenth century commercial block with an adjacent city park and railroad depot. A fire in the mid-twentieth century destroyed the original roof configuration of the Opera House (inventory numbers 5). The storefronts retain much of the original configuration and materials, although some of the entrance doors and window frames have been replaced with modern materials. The building located at 506 and 508 Gault Avenue (inventory number 4) has been determined a noncontributing building because the second story elevation was been extensively altered.

The park has maintained its integrity. New vegetation has replaced much of the original and new concrete sidewalks and park furniture was added in the mid-twentieth century. At this time a small noncontributing building containing public toilets was added.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District - Contributing Properties:

1. 322, 324 Gault Avenue, North, (Sawyer Building): c. 1889; Victorian commercial building; two stories in height; rectangular-shaped; flat roof; brick; main south elevation: very elaborate heavy iron cornice; second floor features two projecting bay windows with multiple panes creating an arched-shaped design, two slender one over one double hung sash windows with arched lintels located between the bays; first floor divided into two storefronts with a central entrance leading to stairwell; storefront has original recessed entrance configuration, cast-iron supports, exposed transoms; modern replacement entrance doors and showcase windows; secondary east elevation: decorative corbelled brick cornice, three projecting chimneys, alternating two bay windows with two slender double sash windows on the second story; small arched window openings with keystones.
2. 400 block Gault Avenue, North, (Fort Payne City Park; previously Union Park): originally designed in c. 1889; open space situated in city block between Gault Avenue to the north, 5th Avenue to the east, 4th Avenue to the west, and the railroad tracks to the south; random vegetation natural to the area; Confederate War Memorial was moved to park in 1936 from original location in front of the now demolished DeKalb County Court House; modern intrusions include a small concrete building housing toilets, wooden gazebo, park benches, swing sets, basket ball hoops.
3. 502 Gault Avenue, North, (Purdy Furniture; previously Fort Payne Coal and Iron Company Headquarters): c.1889; commercial building; corner location; two stories in height; flat roof; brick; main entrance located on clipped corner; second story elevations feature slender four vertical panes over one single pane double hung sash windows, surrounded by ashlar cut sandstone; decorative corbelled brick cornice; first story features four storefronts with sandstone piers; storefronts have metal and glass replacement materials, transoms covered with signboard.
5. 510 Gault Avenue, North, (Opera House): c. 1889; three stories in height; brick; front gabled roof; second and third stories feature three vertical rows of two tiers of double four over four paned double hung sash windows topped with decorative arched panels; first story features a 1920s storefront alteration that includes small windows with stone lintels and keystones, and a rough stone surface. The Opera House is individually listed on the National Register. (NRHP 4/28/70)

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6. 514, 516, 518 Gault Avenue, North, (vacant): c.1889; commercial building; two stories in height; flat roof; brick; second story features two sets of three slender one over one double sashed windows with decorative hoods; elaborate brick cornice with recessed arches; first story features two storefronts with a central doorway leading into stairwell, original storefronts feature recessed entrance configuration, cast-iron supports, transoms, and windows, two-story brick and frame side addition has recessed framed second floor with a shed roof balcony; first story has modern metal and glass store front.

8. 5th Street, Northeast, (Landmarks of DeKalb County Museum, originally Alabama Great Southern Railroad Depot): c. 1890-1891; Romanesque Revival railroad depot; one story in height; asymmetrical in shape; hipped roof with projecting gables and conical-shaped roof over two storied tower; native gray sandstone with pink granite trim; irregular spaced windows with either flat or arched lintels. (NRHP 09/10/71)

Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District - Noncontributing Properties:

4. 506, 508 Gault Avenue, North, (vacant): c.1889; commercial building; brick; two stories in height; side gabled roof is a modern configuration; original corbeled brick cornice removed; second story altered by brick veneering over original surface, removing original hoods, changing the window configurations; first story has original recessed entrance configuration, cast iron supports, transoms with multi-paned border, modern replacement entrance doors; originally the building was identical to 515, 516, 518 Gault Avenue, North (inventory number 6).

7. Utility building in City Park housing public toilets; c. 1960s; one story, concrete block.

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Section number 8 Page 1

Historical Summary

Although Fort Payne was founded in the first half of the 19th century and has served as the DeKalb county seat since 1876, Fort Payne remained a small rural farm community of approximately 500 people until the late 1880s. At this time C. O. Godfrey, a New England businessman, tried to promote the town as a manufacturing center due to its proximity to untapped natural resources. Godfrey formed the Fort Payne Land and Improvement Company in 1887 and solicited the northern states for investors. The company, however, had little success.

The promotion did interest W. P. Rice, a New England capitalist and banker. Rice, along with several other investors, saw the great mining and manufacturing potential of the area and formed the Fort Payne Coal and Iron Company in November 1888. The company actively campaigned in the New England states to promote Fort Payne as an ideal manufacturing center surrounded by an unlimited wealth of iron ore and coal. The company was able to sell 50,000 shares of stock at \$100 per share in just five days.

The Fort Payne Coal and Iron Company purchased vast amounts of land surrounding Fort Payne in hopes it contained a high yield of iron ore, coal, kaolin clay, and lime. The company invested \$1,900,000 in industrial plants, coke ovens, and other equipment. The company began to construct a mineral railroad that was designed to link the rich coal regions of the South to the Atlantic Ocean. Only 14 1/2 miles of the line was completed, however.

Fort Payne attracted other speculative manufacturing companies during this period, such as the Bay State Furnace (1889); Fort Payne Furnace (1890); Fort Payne Mill and Steel Company (1890), the largest of its kind in the South; the Alabama Builder's Hardware Company; and the Fort Payne Stove Works (1890) among others.

But the largest speculative business remained the Fort Payne Coal and Iron Company. The Company took the lead in preparing the small community for the horde of investors and speculators who descended on Fort Payne. The 1889 population of 531 dramatically increased to 2,698 in just one year. The company spent \$1,250,000 to develop Fort Payne as an attractive and modern community. New improvements include designing the gridiron street plan, surveying lots, grading streets, and building water and sewage systems.

The Fort Payne Coal and Iron Company purchased vast amounts of land in Fort Payne to develop for speculation. The land was surveyed and subdivided by the DeKalb Abstract Company. Charles Landstreet, from Fairfax, Virginia, was hired to landscape and beautify the lots. The land was then sold to the many investors and businessmen who came to live and work in Fort Payne. The Fort Payne Coal and Iron Company made credit easy for the purchase of real estate by requiring only one-third cash and the balance in one or two years at six percent.

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It was during this period that the Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District developed. Union Park (inventory number 2) was designed by Charles Landstreet in 1889 as the visual center of the commercial district. Within the year a thriving commercial center was built around the park. The Fort Payne Iron and Coal Company built their prestigious headquarters at the northeast corner of the park at 502 Gault Avenue (inventory number 3). The Fort Payne Opera House (inventory number 5) was built next door at 510 Gault Avenue. The DeKalb Abstract Company, the primary survey and title company in Fort Payne, erected their office at the northwest corner of the park at 322-324 Gault Avenue (inventory number 1). The grand Fort Payne Hotel was built on the 400 block of Gault Avenue directly across from the park (demolished). The Fort Payne passenger depot (NRHP 9/10/71) was erected in 1889 behind the park.

After 1 1/2 years of economic prosperity based on speculation, it was realized that the county's mineral resources had been exaggerated in respect to quantity and quality. The grade of ore proved to be so inferior that the furnaces and mills were closed even after a futile attempt of consolidation and floating a bond issue. Real estate values dropped below 1887 level, forcing many bankrupt investors to sell or abandon their property. Many of the large homes were sold for lumber or scavenged for fuel. So many people exited Fort Payne that its population dropped by one thousand people.

Coupled with the nationwide panic of 1893, Fort Payne was in the depths of depression until 1897 when the stove foundry, lime works, and clay works resumed operations. It was not until a decade into the 20th century that Fort Payne experienced an economic recovery. In 1909 the abandoned Alabama Builder's Hardware Manufacturing Company's main building (NRHP 5/8/86) was purchased for the Florence Hosiery Mill. The mill began operating in 1913, producing ribbing, knitting, and looping services. The name was changed in 1915 to the W. B. Davis and Son Hosiery Mill and became Fort Payne's largest industrial company. The mill served as the major impetus for the local expansion of the industry which earned Fort Payne the title of "Sock Capitol of the World." Between 1920 through 1940 the mills were the principal employer of Fort Payne's population.

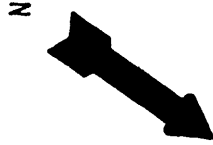
4th STREET NE

SAWYER BUILDING

1

FORT PAYNE BOOM TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT
FORT PAYNE, DEKALB COUNTY, ALABAMA

SCALE: 1" = 100"



GAULT AVENUE

7 n/c

2

CITY PARK
(UNION PARK)

RAILROAD LINE

5th STREET NE

PURDY BUILDING

3

n/c

4

OPERA HOUSE

5

6

ALLEY

6th STREET NE

8 DEPOT

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Section number photo-
graphs Page 1

Information in items 2 - 5 is the same for all photographs listed.

1. 502-518, even, Gault Avenue North
Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District
2. Fort Payne, Alabama, DeKalb County
3. Steven Kay
4. August 1988
5. Alabama Historical Commission
6. Inventory #3,4,5,6, camera facing north
7. Photo #1

1. Fort Payne Opera House
510 Gault Avenue North
Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District
6. Inventory #5, camera facing north
7. Photo #2

1. 514,516,518 Gault Avenue North
Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District
6. Inventory #6, camera facing north
7. Photo #3

1. Sawyer Building
322, 324 Gault Avenue, North
Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District
6. Inventory #1, camera facing west
7. Photo #4

1. City Park
400 block, odd, Gault Avenue North
Fort Payne Boom Town Historic District
6. Inventory #2, camera facing south
7. Photo #5