

HISTORIC RESOURCES WITHIN MUNICIPAL LIMITS

OF FAIRHOPE, AL.
(Multiple Resource)

Owner: Fairhope Single-Tax Corp.
336 Fairhope Avenue
Fairhope, Alabama 36532

Historic name: Gaston Building
Common name: Single-Tax Office

Location: 336 Fairhope Avenue

Verbal boundary description:

Begin at a point 146.8 feet west of the SW Corner of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street, thence west 35.4 feet to a point, thence south 98 feet to a point, thence east 35.4 feet to a point, thence north 98 feet to the point of beginning.

Acreage: Less than one acre

UTM: A-16/413/280/3376/880

Date of Construction: 1924

Architect/Builder: M. Dyson & Co.

Statement of Significance

Period of Significance: 1924-1938

Criterion A-Philosophy/Economics/Communications:

The Gaston Building is significant as the headquarters of the Fairhope Single-Tax Corporation (FSTC) from 1924 to 1938 and as the offices of the Fairhope Courier from 1924 to 1938. The Gaston Building was the center for the intellectual justification and practical business of realizing Henry George's economic philosophy in Fairhope. The Fairhope Courier, created to propagate the Single-Tax Theory, was circulated among supporters worldwide.

Criterion C-Architecture:

The Gaston Building is a good unaltered example of an early 20th century brick commercial building. Much of the building's decorative interest stems from the brick work itself with the only other decorative features provided by stone lintel over the continuous band of windows and peaked parapet with stone cap. The Gaston Building remains as the least altered example of this type of construction in Fairhope. The building is also significant for its association with the prominent local contractor Marmaduke Dyson.

Integrity:

The Gaston Building retains its integrity of location, design and materials. Exterior alterations are limited to a flat aluminum awning across the facade, aluminum doors and second story aluminum windows on the east and west sides. Windows in the second story rear have been boarded up.

The interior integrity is good on the first and second floors. The first floor was originally divided into two rooms, 43 feet by 17 feet. Though this plan remains, dropped ceilings, wood paneling and carpet obscure original interior features. The second story interior, vacated since the 1940s retains its integrity of plan and materials. There are seven rooms upstairs including a restroom and hallway. Hardwood floors are throughout and the corrugated tin ceilings are original. All rooms have five panel wooden doors with original hardware and transoms, plaster walls and original light fixtures. Three exterior windows, two on the west side and one on the east side, have been replaced with aluminum sash.

Description:

Exterior. The Gaston Building, a 1920s commercial structure, is situated on the south side of Fairhope Avenue between N. Section Street and N. Church Street. It is a two story structure, stucco on clay tile with a brick facade. There is a parapeted flat roof, stepped down on both sides. A recessed, square central entrance has three aluminum and glass doors: one centrally located leads upstairs and one to either side leading into the library and lobby respectively. There is a large plate glass window on either side of the entrance with multi-light transoms. A flat aluminum awning covers the entire facade. Above are three sets of windows: a triple set of 6/1 windows over each plate glass window and a pair of 6/1 windows over the entrance. A single stone lintel covers all these windows. There are two rows of headers both above and below the windows with coping along the parapet.

The sides of the building are smooth and painted white with two sets of aluminum windows on the west side and one on the east. There is a one story, shed roof rear section with 2/2 windows and a loading bay. This was used by the Courier.

Interior.

First Floor. The first floor is divided in half, with a library on the east side and work room and record vault on the west side. A lounge and two restrooms are at the rear. The work room has an L-shaped counter running its length, constructed of wood with a formica top. Dropped ceilings, carpet and wood paneling are throughout except for a tile floor in the library.

Second Floor. A central wood staircase leads to the hallway and a suite of seven rooms. This space has not been occupied since the 1940s. There are three front rooms, three interior rooms and a restroom at the end of the hall. Wood floors, corrugated tin ceiling, five panel doors with transoms and original hardware are throughout.

Historical Summary:

By the early 1920s the rube frame buildings in Fairhope's commercial sector began to be replaced with brick and masonry structures. One of the earliest masonry buildings was erected in 1911 for the Masons on S. Section Street. By 1916 there was a two story brick drugstore on the corner of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street designed by Mobile architect George Rogers (1870-1945). The Fairhope Courier was located on the same block as the drugstore, only its quarters were in a one story frame building. The Courier was a vital element in the community, not only as a news source but as the primary printed forum for the Single-Tax experiment in Fairhope. During 1924 the frame office was

demolished and replaced with a modern, two-story brick ediface constructed by M. Dyson & Company. E. B. Gaston, one of Fairhope's founders, owned the structure which became known as the Gaston Building. The Courier occupied the west half of the first floor while the east half was rented by electrical contractors. The Single-Tax Corporation rented an upstairs room for its treasurer, who had formerly occupied a frame house on Section Street. The other upstairs rooms were rented by various small enterprises and even as apartments.

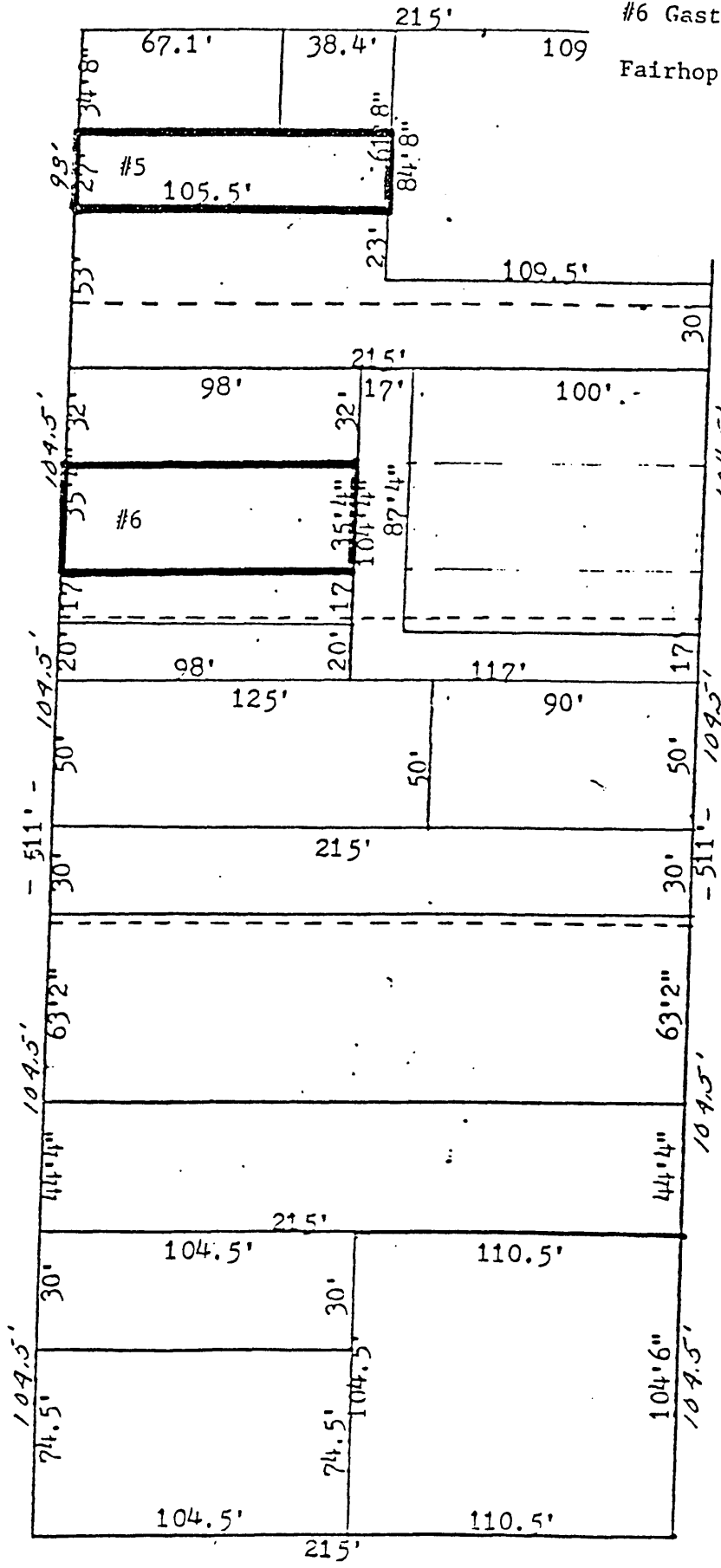
In 1938 the Single-Tax operation moved downstairs and for the next twenty-five years shared the space with the Courier. The Single-Tax Corporation purchased the building from Gaston and remodeled the downstairs in 1957. In 1963 the Courier transferred its operation into the old post office. As the upstairs had been largely vacated by the 1940s, this left the Single-Tax office as the sole occupant. They continue to operate out of the building today.

BOURUM & PEASE "NOR" ®

SECTION STREET

#5 Bank of Fairhope
#6 Gaston Building
Fairhope, Alabama

FAIRHOPE AVE.



CHURCH STREET

DE LA MARE STREET