

HISTORIC RESOURCES WITHIN MUNICIPAL LIMITS

#8

OF FAIRHOPE, AL.  
(Multiple Resource)

Owner: Terry Everett  
Gulf Coast Media  
P. O. Box 509  
Robertsdale, Al. 36567

Historic name: United States Post Office  
Common name: Courier Building

Location: 325 Fairhope Avenue

Verbal boundary description:

Begin at a point 310.33 feet west of the NW corner Fairhope Avenue and Section Street, thence west 32 feet to a point, thence north 125 feet to a point (bounded on the west by an alley), thence east 32 feet to a point, thence south 125 feet to the point of beginning.

Acreage: Less than one acre

UTM: A-16/413/240/3376/920

Date of Construction: 1932

Architect/Builder: M. Dyson & Co.

Statement of Significance

Period of Significance: 1932

Criterion C-Architecture:

The Courier building is the finest example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style of architecture in Baldwin County. Its low hip roof, symmetrical, recessed facade, pedimented entrance and columned portico are all features of the style. The Courier building is also significant for its association with the prominent local contractor Marmaduke Dyson, who built it to his own design and was responsible for the construction of other Fairhope buildings including: Bank of Fairhope (1927) and the Gaston Building (1924).

Integrity:

The Courier building retains its integrity of materials and location. Exterior appearance is the same with original doors, windows and decorative features. There is some water damage under the portico.

The interior space has been partitioned to create office space. The original ceiling beams are, however, in evidence. The original space consisted of an open space with a counter.

### Description:

Italian Renaissance Revival in style, the Courier building, formerly the post office, sits on the north side of Fairhope Avenue in the middle of the block between North Church Street and North Section Street in the downtown area. The Bloxham Building steps out to the east and a narrow alley runs down the west side. A large magnolia tree grows at the west front of the building, buckling the sidewalk and crowding the building. The structure itself is cast stone with a smooth, rubbed surface, the facade scored to resemble blocks. The building is three by four bays with a six bay extension to the rear which served as a mail handling (1952) area while the front portion served as a lobby and offices. This front portion is one story with a low hip roof. The rear section, also one story, has a flat, gently sloping roof. The main entrance is recessed under a portico with three arches supported on two Tuscan columns. The molding on the arches and keystones is of a different color than the mass of the building. The facade has a pair of arched, wooden, casement windows flanking double wood and glass doors with pediment and surround. The west side of the building, on the alley, has an arched opening with sill in the portico and four arched casement windows in the structure. A molded cornice with dentil work covers the facade and wraps around the west side. "United States Post Office" appears across the front with bull's-eye moulding each side. The six bay rear extension is stucco with flat, gently sloping roof, metal sash windows with brick sills and a large loading door at the rear.

The interior space has been rearranged with paneled partitions. Wooden boxed beams run east-west on the ceiling and are original as is crown molding in the front office. Floors vary from shag carpet to linoleum tile. The mail room retains its original walls and ceiling though the space has been partitioned in half.

### Historical Summary:

Fairhope had a post office by 1896, only two years after its founding on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. This saved the fledgling community's residents from having to go to Battles, Daphne or Point Clear for mail service. As the town grew its post office attempted to keep pace, changing location several times. By 1930 Fairhope had a population of 1540 and its downtown was composed of substantial brick, stone and concrete block buildings. To match the town's growth, a new post office was planned and construction begun early in 1932. The new location, on the north side of Fairhope Avenue, was in the heart of downtown and would be convenient to the bulk of Fairhope's population. Dyson and Company Contractors got the job and built to their own design. This local company was responsible for the construction of many buildings in Fairhope including the Gaston Building (1924), Bloxham Building (1932), and the Bank of Fairhope (1927). By the end of July the Courier noted that "The new glass and metal boxes have been ordered and the woodwork separating the working part from the lobby is being pushed to completion." (Courier, 7/21/32). On September 29 the Courier proclaimed, "Fairhope Post Office Now in Fine New Building, On Fairhope Avenue," and called the new Italian Renaissance structure a "gem". (Courier, 9/29/32). The building served its purpose until 1964 when the post office relocated to a lot on Section Street. Today, 23 years later, still another move is planned. In the meantime the building constructed for the purpose in 1932 serves as the offices for the Eastern Shore Courier, formerly located in the Gaston Building.

1973

SECTION STREET

#7 Bloxham Building  
 #8 Postoffice-Courier Buildi  
 Fairhope, Alabama

