

HISTORIC RESOURCES WITHIN MUNICIPAL LIMITS

OF FAIRHOPE, AL.
(Multiple Resource)

Owner: James H. Faulkner State
Junior College
10 North Summit Street
Fairhope, Al. 35223

Historic name: School of Organic Education
Common name: School of Organic Education

Location: Bounded by Fairhope Avenue to the north, Morphy Avenue to
the south, Bancroft Street to the west and School Street
to the east.

Verbal boundary description:

Blocks 9,10, and 11, Division 1. Begin at a point on the southwest
corner of Fairhope Avenue and School Street, run south 1054 feet to the
northwest corner of Morphy Avenue and School Street, thence west 422 feet
to the northwest corner of Morphy Avenue and Bancroft Street, thence north
1054 feet to the southeast corner of Fairhope Avenue and Bancroft Street,
thence 422 feet east to the point of beginning.

Acreage: 10 UTM: A-16/413/580/3376/890
B-16/413/580/3376/560
C-16/413/440/3376/560
D-16/413/440/3376/890

Dates of Construction: Bell Building-1904,1910 Architect/Builder: Unknown
Dahlgren Hall-1912
Art Barn-1924

Statement of Significance

Period of Significance: 1904-1938

Criterion C-Architecture:

The historic buildings which comprise the School of Organic Education
are significant for their range in materials and style. The Bell Building
is significant for its ornamentation, uncommon in Fairhope and Dahlgren Hall
as a pristine one room school building. The Art Barn is significant for
its clay tile construction which became the vogue during the 1920s.

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The Organic campus school buildings represent the modest architectural
effort applied to school buildings which were the rule in Fairhope's egalitarian
and resource-poor environment. The oldest building is the Bell Building
originally constructed as a district school for the public schools in 1904.
The Bell Building represents the general influence of modest architectural

expression in Fairhope. The west room, a 2x1 bay structure was built in 1910 and connected to the Bell Building at the rear. Dahlgren Hall (1912) is more typical of Fairhope building techniques. Originally constructed as a manual training shop, Dahlgren Hall is a simple one room structure with a hipped roof. This building exhibits a stuccoed exterior (so widespread in Fairhope and known as "Single-Tax Stucco") and beaded board interior with wainscoting. The Art Barn (1924) exhibits building techniques popular in Fairhope during the twenties. This one story building is laid out in a "T" shape with gable roofs, knee braces and multiple windows. It is constructed out of clay tiles which resemble oversized bricks or undersized concrete blocks. As these tiles are moulded like concrete blocks, the resulting dead-air mass acts as an excellent insulator. The Courier advertised such tile as fireproof and capable of creating "the house everlasting".¹ While only the Bell Building displays any architectural "flair", all three structures exhibit the practical and efficient use of materials that so characterizes Fairhope architecture.

Criterion A and B-Education:

The School of Organic Education is significant as an influential educational experiment initiated in Fairhope and subsequently copied elsewhere. Founded in 1907 by a native Minnesotan, Marietta Johnson, the school stressed the education of the whole child - body, mind and spirit. The lack of such formal strictures as exams and grades attracted national attention.

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John Dewey visited the school and became an enthusiastic advocate. He profiled the institution in his book Schools of Tomorrow (1913) and declared that it demonstrated "how the ideal of equality of opportunity for all is to be transmuted into reality."² Well known intellectuals were regular visitors: Upton Sinclair enrolled his son David in 1909 and Clarence Darrow gave frequent seminars. Marietta Johnson tirelessly promoted the concept throughout the United States. She viewed the Fairhope school as a model or demonstration of Organic Education that would convince educators nationwide. She enjoyed modest success in creating satellite schools in at least nine communities (examples-Caldwell, New Jersey, Arden, Delaware, and Menlo Park, California). Interest in Organic education proved a passing phenomenon however and the Fairhope school steadily lost students.

Integrity:

The Bell Building, Dahlgren Hall and the Art Barn have retained their integrity of location, design, and materials. The Bell Building consists of two elements - the three by two bay main structure with its portico and belfry and the two by one bay "west room" which extends as a "T" at the rear. These two elements are joined by a one story, flat roofed, masonry passageway dating

¹The Fairhope Courier, 13 January 1922.

²Paul Gaston, "Fairhope as Utopia: Reflections of a Fairhoper." Eastern Shore Courier. Wednesday 5 March 1986.

from the 1920s. This feature, a slight realignment of the porch columns, a solid foundation replacing original piers, removal of the original chimneys and the bell are the only exterior changes. The interior rooms - beaded board wainscoting with corrugated tin above - are unaltered though there are lowered ceilings and new sheetrock in places. Dahlgren Hall (1912) retains most of its integrity and changes have been sympathetic. The original hip roof was tile, where the present roof is standing seam tin. Originally of frame construction, Dahlgren Hall was stuccoed during the twenties like so many Fairhope structures. The front and rear shed roof porches are recent, though close to the originals in appearance. The shed lean-to on the south side also shows in old photographs and is probably original. The interior consists of beaded board walls and ceilings, wainscoting and large folding doors to partition the north portion. The interior of the lean-to is carpeted and sheetrocked. The Art Barn (1924) is largely as it was built. The building tile is not so evident under a coat of white paint. Though all the original window transoms remain, all the windows are new 6/6 aluminum sash. The interior is open with roof trussing visible at the north end. Concrete floors and tile walls remain.

Description:

The Bell Building is a three by two bay rectangular, one story, frame structure with gable roof to the sides. There is a gabled portico with Tuscan columns at the entrance and a belfry above this on the ridgeline of the main structure. A two by one bay one story, gabled addition (1910) acts as a "T" extension to the rear and is connected by a flat roofed masonry passageway. The Bell Building rests on a solid wall foundation which replaces the original brick piers. The front entrance has sidelights and a sunburst transom. There is a large palladian window on each side and two pairs 2/2 windows each gable end. Small brackets are present on all the eaves of both the main structure and the "west room." The belfry is of square, stick construction with a pyramidal roof. The interior plan consists of a ten foot wide hall with a large classroom on either side. The hall leads straight on through the masonry passage into the "west room" or "T" extension built in 1910. The two school rooms have the original beaded board wainscoting with corrugated tin above this. Ceilings have been dropped. The wide central hall has had some sheetrock added. The "west room" retains its beaded board.

Dahlgren Hall is a seven by two bay, one story, stucco on frame structure with a hip, standing seam tin, roof. It rests on a solid wall foundation. The main entrance consists of two, four panel doors sheltered by a shed roof porch on square posts. Three 2/2 windows are on each side. All the windows have frame surrounds and there are exposed wooden posts at each corner of the building. A boxed cornice goes all the way around. A small shed roof lean-to on the south side of the building is probably original though the windows have been replaced. The interior consists of one large room with large folding doors at the north end capable of creating two rooms. All ceilings and walls are beaded board and there is a chair rail all the way around. Floors are hardwood. The interior of the lean-to has been sheetrocked and carpeted.

The Art Barn is a large "T" shaped one story, gable roofed, clay tile structure. Resting on a concrete slab foundation, this building's bays are recessed panels with paired 6/6 windows and transoms. All three gable ends have knee braces. The entrances at the junction of the two wings are all simple, and later wooden doors. The interior is an open format with workbenches and tables. The concrete floor and tile walls are uncovered. Ceilings are dropped except at the end of the north wing where the wooden roof trusses are visible.

The buildings within the district are categorized in the following manner:

Contributing Structures	3
Noncontributing Structures	<u>7</u>
Total Structures	10

Historic Summary:

Despite the difficulties and primitive conditions facing the early Fairhoppers, provision was quickly made for a school. A lot on the corner of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street was set aside in 1896 and a rude frame building served some 26 pupils. Children of Single-Taxers were charged fifty cents and others one dollar. In 1902 Marietta Johnson, a native of Minnesota, was hired to teach in the tiny colony. This woman was to have a profound effect on education in Fairhope, and before her death in 1938, somewhat of an impact on progressive education nationwide. Johnson received her training at the State Normal School in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. Her philosophy of teaching was profoundly influenced by Nathan Oppenheim's The Development of the Child (1898). Oppenheim stressed tasks as well as traditional academic courses in the educational process. By the summer of 1906 Marietta Johnson was using the term "Organic Education," taken from C. Hanford Henderson's Education and the Larger Life (1902). Organic education was schooling aimed at nurturing the whole child - spiritual, mental, and physical. As the Courier defined it, "The child is a unit; body, mind, and spirit should be developed simultaneously. Growth should be unconscious and natural, It should be joyous and continuous, unhampered by striving for marks and promotions."³ With this philosophy as her focus, Johnson formally founded the School of Organic Education in November of 1907. The school began in a small cottage on Church Street and was free to locals. By 1908 there were fifty students. A typical days instruction included mathematics, wood shop work, arts and crafts, history, folk dancing, science and cooking. Grades and tests were dismissed as counterproductive in that they instilled fear of failure rather than joy of learning. This educational experiment received widespread attention and endorsement. The New York Times sympathetically followed Organic's progress for years. Dr. John Dewey, a national figure in progressive education gave an enthusiastic review in his Schools of Tomorrow (1913) and noted intellectuals nationwide were drawn to visit this "utopia" in the deep south. In 1910 the Single-Tax Corporation purchased the Bell Building and provided ten acres of land rent free for the Organic School. Constructed in 1904 as a district school for the public schools, the Bell Building was a decided step up for the fledgling experiment in Organic education. This structure had brackets, palladian windows, a belfry and "two splendidly lighted rooms and a hall ten feet wide through the middle."⁴ By 1918 there were 131 students, many of them foreign. These students boarded on the campus, providing an important source of revenue. The school prospered during the 1920s and consisted of nine buildings, over 200 students and 17 teachers. The close relations with the Single-Tax Colony were articulated by a planner in 1922, "The logical deduction of the spiritual leadership of the Organic School on the Single-Tax Colony is that the Organic principals are paramount in community life, not only in the school, but also in the city and that the laws of Organic structure and function assert their power and rule in all the scale of social life."⁵ Johnson traveled extensively promoting Organic education. She taught a regular summer course at Greenwich, Connecticut and eventually established nine satellite schools from New Jersey to California. She authored two books on the subject: Thirty Years with an Idea and Youth in a World of Men, both of which which were prosaic and dull. Friends

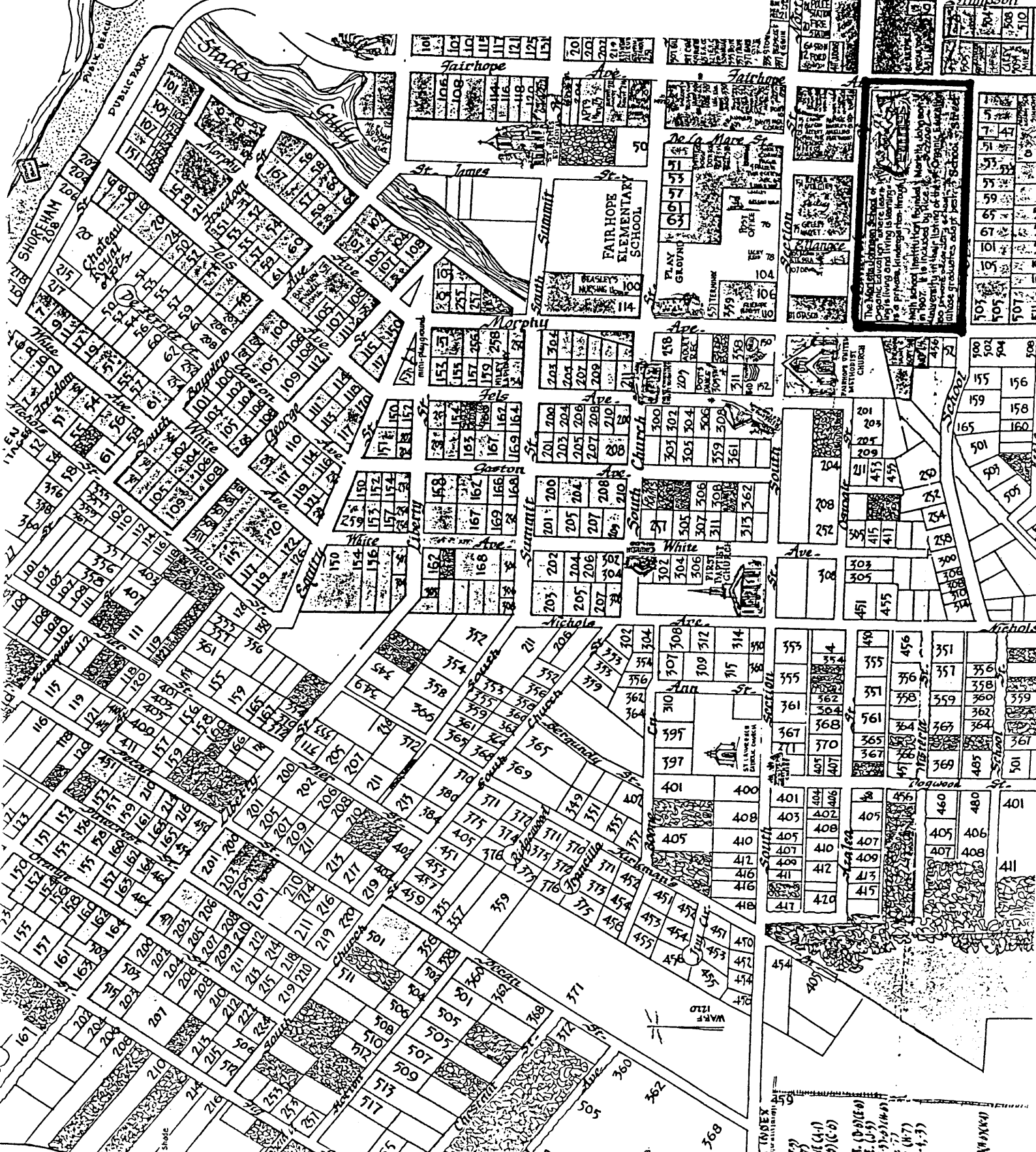
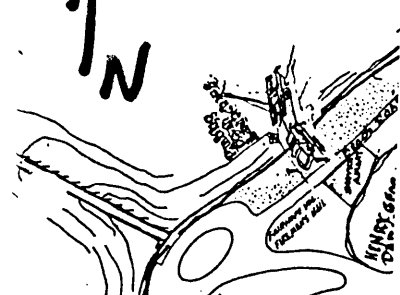
³The Fairhope Courier. 28 October 1915.

⁴The Fairhope Courier. 3 February 1905.

⁵Charles White Huntington, Enclaves of Economic Rent. Fiske-Warren:Harvard. 1921

were disappointed in these work's lack of excitement, something which Marietta Johnson conveyed so vividly in person. The depression years were difficult as outside revenue slacked off and boarders returned home. The 1930s was a period of one financial crisis after another for the Organic School. In addition, the tide of progressive education left the philosophy in its wake, never to recover. Marietta Johnson died of exhaustion in 1938 and was mourned by a significant portion of Fairhope's population. Despite persistent funding crises, Organic continued under subsequent leaders of lesser stature. The school also began to attract problem children which in turn lowered its image. At present (1987) there are 22 students and the campus has been sold to Faulkner State Junior College. Leaders of the Organic School have pledged to continue.

#3 School of Organic Education
Fairhope, Alabama



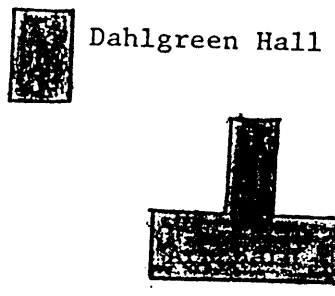
The Metropolitan School of Organic Education is a private, kindergarten through high school institution founded in 1911. It is located in Fairhope, Alabama, and is a member of the National Association of Organic Schools. The school's curriculum is based on the principles of organic education, which emphasizes the integration of nature, art, and science into the learning process. The school's motto is "Learning by Living".

11. (P-2)(C-6)
 E. (C-5)
 13. (P-2)(C-6)
 14. (P-2)(C-6)
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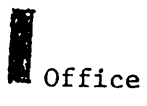
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SEE 1" = 50' FAIRHOPE MAP 05-46-03-37-00-801

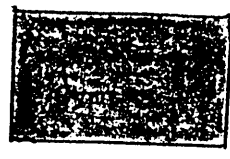
#3 Organic School
Fairhope, Alabama
Blds. Not
to Scale



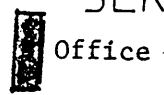
Dahlgreen Hall



Office



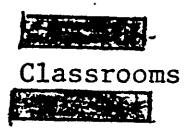
BLK. II



Office



Bell Building

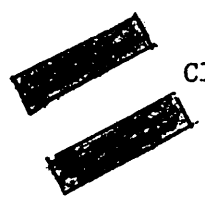


Classrooms

BANCROFT STREET



FAIRHOPE SCHOOL OF ORGANIC EDUCATION



Classrooms

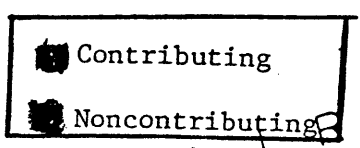
BLK. 10

8

10 Ac(c)

SCHOOL STREET

BLK. 2



F A I R H O P E

BLK. 9

BLK. 2

BANCROFT STREET

SCHOOL STREET

Survey & Report of Lots 8, 9 & 10 of Unrecorded Ettle's Sub. & Lots 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 & 8 Central Park Add'n to Fairhope

50' R/W