

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: Dothan Municipal Light and Water Plant

other name/site number: Powerhouse and Substation

2. Location

street & number: 126 North College Street

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Dothan

vicinity: N/A

state: AL county: Houston

code: 069

zip code: 36302

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
<u>1</u>	_____	sites
<u>1</u>	_____	structures
<u>2</u>	_____	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria.      See continuation sheet.

*Therence Duke*

*8/13/91*

Signature of certifying official

Date

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 Patrick Andrews 10/3/91  
     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 of Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: INDUSTRY/energy facility Sub:       
GOVERNMENT/public works     

Current : OTHER/city storage Sub:       
OTHER/city offices

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

OTHER  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation Brick roof asphalt  
walls Brick other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Significance: Community Planning and  
Development  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1912-1942 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates: 1918-19 1928 1933

Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: W.F. Thornton, Consulting Engineer  
G.M. Lunsford, Contractor  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.  
X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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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: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: approx. 2.5 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>16</u>	<u>653470</u>	<u>3455420</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

The boundaries of the property are contained within the legal description as recorded at City Hall, Dothan, Alabama: PT. of W 1/2 of NE 1/4 Section 24 T3N R26E BEG. at the NE Intersection of U.S. Hwy. #84 and North College St. thence North 108.68` to P.O.B. TH. North 332". E195`, SE 285", SW 535" to P.O.B. Sec. 24, T3N, R26E.

Boundary Justification: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

The boundaries of the property are contained within the legal description and reflect the location and original lot of the Dothan Municipal Light and Water Plant.

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11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Mary Shell, Melanie Betz/Historians; Jennifer Bryant/National Register Intern

Organization: Alabama Historical Commission Date: July 18, 1991

Street & Number: 725 Monroe Street Telephone: (205)242-3184

City or Town: Montgomery State: AL ZIP: 36130

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Dothan Municipal Light and Water Plant Page #1

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The Dothan Municipal Light and Water Plant originally consisted of a powerhouse, garage and tool shed, prison yard, cooling pond, coal yard, two pump houses, machine storage building, small tool shed, covered reservoir, substation, auxiliary reservoir, underground gasoline tank, two scales, a well, and two small office buildings. A 150-foot tall six-sided smokestack was situated on the southeast corner of the powerhouse. Today, only the powerhouse remains from the original plant complex. The powerhouse building is now being used for office and storage space by the city of Dothan. An electrical substation is located adjacent to the building, and the surrounding property is used for equipment storage.

The powerhouse is a large rectangular-shaped building with about 15,000 square feet of usable floor space. The building is divided into three sections as follows: front (office) section - 2-story, 2,535 square feet; middle (storage) section - 6,500 square feet; and back (storage) section - 4,040 square feet. The original substation was located on the north side of the power plant. Under the first floor of the middle section are holes in the wall that were used to run wire from the generator to the substation which was constructed on the south side of the powerhouse in the late 1930s or early 1940s.

The office or front section of the powerhouse is a flat roofed building and consists of two stories. Visitors to the plant offices climbed six stairs and entered through double doors in a recessed entrance ornamented by a plain round fanlight. The fanlight is accented with an attractive brick and granite arch. The double doors have three vertical windows above the horizontal panels. The building features a corbelled parapet that contains a granite tablet directly above the central second-story window and first-story entry. It is inscribed: "Municipal Light & Water Plant - Built 1912-13 - W.F. Thornton, Consulting Eng'r." Windows on the north, west, and south facades were originally composed of six-over-six lights. Large, single panes of glass have replaced the original double sash design in all but one of the windows. The facade windows have molded stone lintels, stone sills, and decorative shutters. The office building is cooled with numerous window air-conditioning units.

Offices on the first floor are divided by a large central hall. A stairway to the second floor is found in the northeast corner of the central hall. A set of three offices, a storage room, and a bathroom are situated on both the north and south sides of the hall. The walls are constructed of horizontal tongue and groove boards above a 3 1/2 foot vertical tongue and groove wainscoting. The ceiling is constructed of 1 1/2 inch tongue and groove boards. The pine floors have been covered with vinyl. Double doors on the east end of the office lead into the middle section of the building.

The second floor of the office building is reached by a stairway from the northeast corner of the first floor central hall. The stairs ascend to a large hall. A bathroom and small kitchen are located directly in front of the landing. The floor space is divided into a large conference room, spacious recreation room, and two adjacent storage rooms. Wall construction is plaster and tongue and groove boards. The floors are 3 inch pine boards. The floors in the conference room have been covered with vinyl, and a dropped ceiling has been installed.

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The large middle section of the powerhouse is used for storage and office space. A plywood walled office structure has been added in recent years. A large basement runs underneath the wooden floor which extends across three-fourths of the room space. A ramp leads down into an open section of the basement. Brick piers support the substation for the flooring which covers the remaining basement area. Roof trusses and beams which support the low sloped gable roof are clearly visible. Some gauges and electrical buses which were part of the original equipment are also in this middle section. Window sashes have been removed and replaced with plywood. Large arched door entrances are part of the building's south facade.

The back section of the powerhouse is covered by a low hipped roof which is surmounted by a large secondary wooden structure with a gabled roof. A wooden shed has been attached to the south end of this section and a portion of the middle section. Two large sliding doors are found on the east side of the back section. This part of the powerhouse was used for coal storage and is mostly open space. A stepped brick fire wall separates the back section from the middle section.

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CRITERION A - Community Planning and Development

At the time of its completion in 1913, the Dothan Municipal Light and Water Plant was the only coal generated power plant in Alabama's Wiregrass region. This facility provided all electric and water service to the local area from 1913 to 1928 except for brief periods from 1918-19 when Columbia Power Company took over. The Dothan Municipal Light and Water Plant is also significant for its association with the development of the city of Dothan. Constructed during the city's boom period in the early 20th century, the plant served the needs of a growing population and was a source of pride and income for the community.

The Municipal Light and Water Plant originally consisted of a powerhouse and substation, office buildings, garages, a tool shed, cooling pond, coal yard, and several other storage buildings and structures related to the complex. Today, only the powerhouse and a substation remain from the original complex. Although most of the windows of the powerhouse have been altered, the exterior retains much of its original fabric including its brick corbelling and veneer, recessed entrance with a crowning fanlight, and its overall shape and form. The interior of the building contains some gauges and electrical buses that were part of the original equipment.

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Dothan lies in the Wiregrass region of Alabama, which was not settled until after the Civil War due to its poor soil (the county was not even organized until 1903). Later, fertilizers improved agricultural conditions and a timber industry developed in the region. At least three major railroad lines provided transportation for agricultural and timber products in the area. Dothan, as the county seat, flourished because of the new economy and became known as the "Metropolis of the Wiregrass." Between 1910 and 1920 the population of Dothan grew by 48% to 10,034. Numerous schools and two hospitals were built. New industries such as the Dothan Ice Cream Company were moving into the area.<sup>1</sup> The town expanded too quickly and modern government and public works facilities were needed. In 1914 a new City Hall building was constructed on the site of the original power plant and a larger municipal light and water plant was constructed between 1912-13 at a cost of \$100,000 to serve Dothan's growing urban population.<sup>2</sup> The building is located immediately adjacent to Dothan's Main Street Commercial Historic District. All of the buildings in this district are commercial and warehouse structures dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries when Dothan was undergoing steady growth and developing as the trade and transportation center of the Wiregrass area.

The plant, the only coal generated facility built in the Wiregrass region, was constructed by consulting engineer W.F. Thornton and contractor G.M. Lunsford and functioned as a water and electric plant. Housed under the first floor of the middle section was a large water pump with a million-gallon ground storage tank and a 150-foot tall, six-sided smokestack on the south side of the building. The pump had a capacity of 2,000,000 gallons per day. Two 3,000 KW generators capable of supporting a town of 20,000 were installed.<sup>3</sup>

Dothan was expanding so quickly that when Columbia Power Company began supplying the city with power from their hydroelectric plant in 1918, they could not meet the demands of the town, and their contract was terminated in 1919.<sup>4</sup> Dothan began to use the light and water plant as a promotion device to get industry into this still primarily rural area. Advertising booklets boasted of Dothan's cheap power. The city also benefited from the money brought in from the plant itself. Revenues for electricity and water combined were \$58,284 in 1918, \$73,672 in 1920, and \$155,832 in 1925.<sup>5</sup>

However, by 1928 Dothan's municipal plant had become outdated and expensive to operate. Dothan residents now paid higher rates than anywhere else in the state, and funds were needed to build schools and pay off debts. After a heated debate, Dothan's Municipal Light and Water Plant shut down, and the city began purchasing power from Alabama Power Company which utilized hydroelectric facilities.<sup>6</sup> Five years later in 1933 when the contract with Alabama Power was completed, the city made improvements to the Dothan Municipal plant and despite the cost to the residents, the switch was made back to "home manufactured electricity."<sup>7</sup> However, in 1942 Dothan once again began purchasing some of its power from Alabama Power, and by 1949 all of the city's power came from Alabama Power. At this time, Dothan's only source of power generation was shut down and all generators removed.<sup>8</sup>

The powerhouse is currently owned by the city of Dothan and will soon be used for the Wiregrass Museum of Art.



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1. Pamela Ann and Wendell H. Stepp, Dothan: A Pictorial History, (Norfolk: Donning Company, 1984), p. 52.
2. Ibid., p. 113.
3. Dothan Morning News, 11 October 1913.
4. Stepp, p. 52.
5. "Houston County," vertical file located in the Alabama Archives, Montgomery, Alabama.
6. Dothan Eagle, various articles January-August 1928.
7. Ibid., 21 June 1933.
8. Stepp, p. 54.

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Dothan City Council Minutes, 1911-1914.

Dothan Eagle. Various dates, 1928, 1933, 1949.

Dothan Morning News. 11 October 1913.

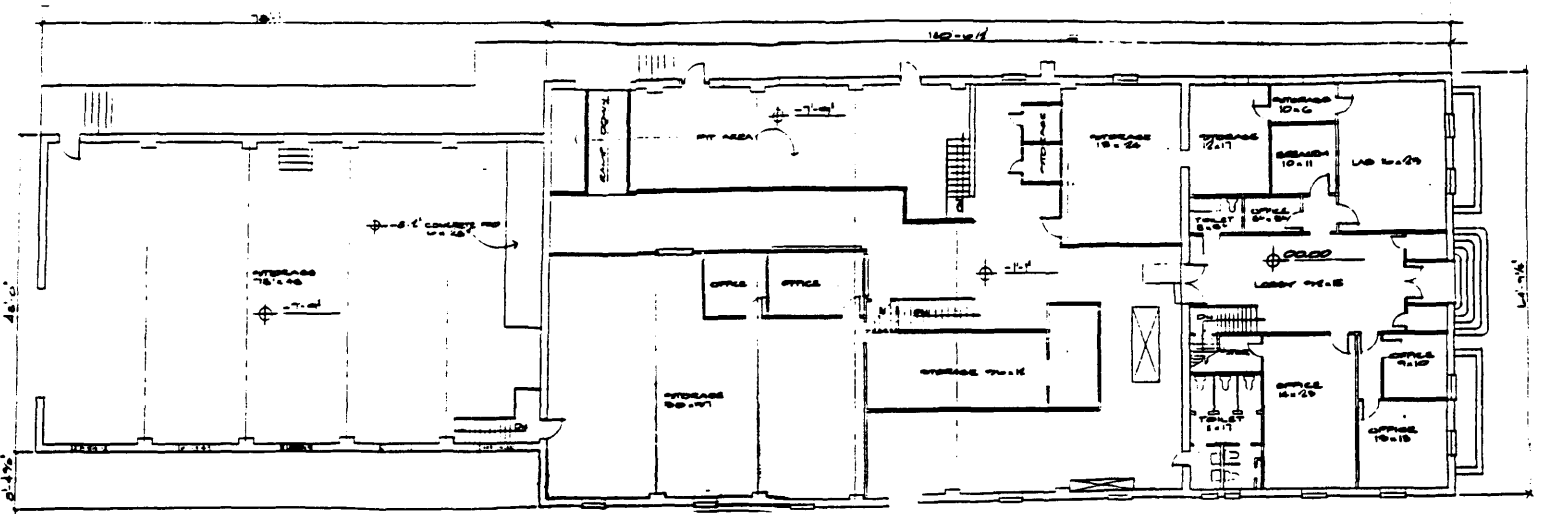
"Houston County." Vertical file located in the Alabama Archives, Montgomery, Alabama.

Martin, Thomas W. The Story of Electricity in Alabama. Birmingham: Birmingham Publishing Company, 1953.

Stepp, Pamela Ann, and Wendell H. Dothan: A Pictorial History. Norfolk: Donning Company, 1984.

Stepp, Wendell H. Interview with Jennifer A. Bryant, 15 July 1991.

4/27/50



Dothan Municipal Light and Water Plant  
Dothan, Alabama

NOT TO SCALE

