

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received MAR 15 1988
date entered

ALABAMA
~~HISTORICAL COMMISSION~~

1. Name

historic Battles Wharf Historic District
and/or common Battles Wharf Historic District
MAR 1 1988
RECEIVED

2. Location

street & number No street address at present. District lies between Mobile Bay and U.S. 98 Eastern Shore Boulevard, stretches .4 mile from just north Woolworth Avenue to just north Buerger Lane. not for publication
city, town Battles Wharf vicinity of Fairhope congressional district 1
state Alabama code 01 county Baldwin code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership
street & number
city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Judge's Office, Baldwin County Courthouse
street & number Public Square
city, town Bay Minette state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no
date 1970-present ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local
depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission
city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition☐ excellent☒ good☐ fair☐ deteriorated☐ ruins☐ unexposed**Check one**☒ unaltered☒ altered**Check one**☒ original site☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Battles Wharf, also called Battles, lies on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay between Point Clear and Fairhope. The community extends for two miles between the Grand Hotel to the south and Sweetwater Branch to the north and averages only 800 feet in width between Highway 98 and Mobile Bay. The Battles Wharf Historic District is a narrow strip less than half a mile in length, from north of Woolworth Avenue to just north of Buerger Lane. To the south and north of the designated district, modern construction has replaced the historic architecture.

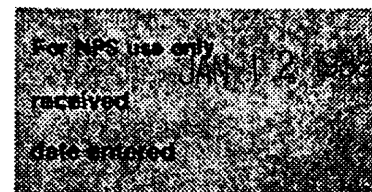
The lots between Highway 98 and Mobile Bay run roughly one thousand feet southeast to northwest. The houses face west across the bay and have long gravel or shell drives out to Highway 98. Simple gates with property names on shingles control access from the road. Four public roads traverse this area however; south to north these are Woolworth Avenue, Battles Road, Moog's Lane and Buerger Lane. These unpaved lanes once led to wooden wharves and steamboat landings in the bay.

The entire bayfront may be traveled by a public walkway, mostly paved though in many places only an earthen path. This walkway ties the community together and is the focus of activity. As a result, many houses have private piers and boathouses. The beach itself is subject to erosion and many owners have constructed wooden traverses to combat the problem. Above the beach is a continuous bluff, in places over six feet high, buttressed periodically by a seawall. The roughly twenty-five feet between the bluff and lot lines is planted in grass and shaded by live oaks, pine, cedar, dogwood and magnolia. The public walkway traverses this area. Most front yards are informally landscaped with hedges and flowers and set off from the pathway by white picket fences. The long narrow backyards are left in a natural state. North of Moog's Lane the bluffs are less pronounced and the stretch between the sidewalk and bay doubled in width.

The houses themselves are predominantly one and one-and-a-half story frame cottages dating from 1842 to the present (there are only two non-historic properties in the district). Recessed porches are most common and three houses have an additional "rain porch" (Lots 12,13,14). These attached shed roof porches extend out from recessed galleries and have posts meeting the ground. The rain porch became popular during the late 19th century and was applied to older houses along the bay as well as to those constructed at the turn of the century. Overall, architectural style seems to have been dictated by the climate (wide halls, broad porches, rain porches and tall windows) though a few cottages display Victorian elements (examples Lots 7,10,11, and 12).

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The integrity of these historic buildings is good. Some of the porches have been winterized but the facades remain visible. Asbestos siding is present on two of the contributing properties; aluminum and vinyl siding are not present.

Survey Methodology

The Battles Wharf Historic District is a direct outgrowth of the Baldwin County Architectural Site Survey. This survey was conducted from October 1985 to October 1986 by John Sledge, Architectural Historian with the Mobile Historic Development Commission. The survey consists of photographs and architectural descriptions of over 1300 buildings over fifty years of age in Baldwin County, all cross-referenced with U. S. Geological Survey maps.

Due to the grass roots interest in and heavy concentration of historic resources along the Eastern Shore, the MHDC initiated its Baldwin County National Register Nominations in that area.

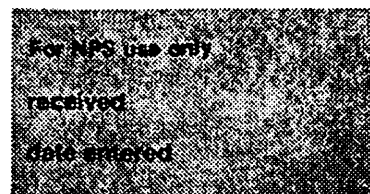
Information on the history of Battles Wharf was garnered from oral interviews, old newspapers, promotional pamphlets, photographs and maps. Architectural descriptions were expanded and emphasis placed on the water orientation.

Buildings in the district have been categorized as follows:

- 14 contributing structures
- 2 noncontributing structures
- 16 total structures

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Contributing (14)

Lot 35, c. 1900

BA-121-2

One story shingled cottage; gable roof front; low hip roof porch wraps around three sides, facade screened, sides filled, french doors in facade; two pane window in gable; one interior brick chimney

Lot 34, c. 1900

BA-121-3

One and a half story, clapboarded cottage; gable roof sides; slight kick-off shed roof porch covers full facade, screened with exposed rafters; paired 2/2 windows each side; filled shed roof porch across rear; three sets french doors in facade; central hall; one interior ridge chimney on south half of roof

Lot 25, c. 1900

BA-121-4

One and a half story, clapboarded cottage; gable roof sides; attached shed roof porch covers full facade, chamfered posts and balusters; large gable dormer above with paired 6/6 windows; paired 9/9 windows sides; one story gable addition north side; half story gable windows shuttered; two ridge chimneys with corbeled caps.
(porch winterized with glass)

Lot 23, 1905, W. B. Curran House

BA-121-5

Two story; clapboarded; cross gable, pents across gables; attached hip roof porch wraps around three bay facade, turned posts, balusters; boxed cornice closed return (major renovation just completed; porch glassed in; exterior brick chimney rebuilt; windows replaced with 6/6 wood sash)

Lot 22, 1898

BA-121-6

One and a half story; clapboarded; cross gable; attached hip roof porch with turned posts and sawn balusters covers entire facade; three by six bays with gable ell to rear; one interior brick chimney with corbeled cap
(porch winterized with plastic)

Lot 17, 1888, Aaron Moog House

BA-121-7

One story Victorian cottage; clapboarded; high hip roof; interior brick chimney with corbeled cap; recessed porch covers full facade, chamfered posts, sawn balusters and brackets; five bay facade with central hall, double doors with transom; 6/6 windows with shutters; gable ell to rear; brick wall foundation

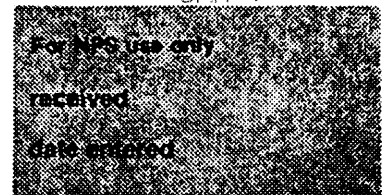
Lot 18, c. 1900

BA-121-8

One and a half story; clapboarded; cross gambrel roof; attached shed roof porch covers full facade, screened; pent across front gambrel; set three

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1/1 windows in half story; closed eave returns at side gambrels with paired 1/1 windows; braced overhang in gambrels; bay window south side; shed roof back porch filled; diamond window in the half story of the rear gambrel above the tripled 1/1 windows; concrete block piers. (asbestos siding)

Lot 14, 1842, additions c. 1895, Joe Norville House BA-121-10
One story; clapboarded; steeply pitched gable roof sides with hip skirt around three sides covering porches; raised brick piers; recessed porch wraps around three sides, square posts and screened; rain porch with posts meeting ground; wide central hall; french doors in facade, large transom; seven bay facade; beaded board interior; one story gable dependency attached north rear; attached shed roof porch; central chimney

Lot 13, c. 1845, dormers c. 1900 BA-121-11
One and a half story; clapboarded; gable roof sides; two wide gable dormers with pair 6/6 windows and round vents; pair 6/6 windows each side elevation with square louvered vent above gable; recessed porch covers full facade; shed roof rain porch with square posts meeting the ground; central hall; brick piers with slat infill (porch glassed in)

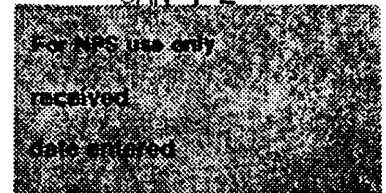
Lot 12, 1895 BA-121-14
One story cottage; high hip roof; clapboarded; recessed porch covers full facade, balustraded; shed roof rain porch with post meeting ground; three bay facade, paired 6/6 windows flank double doors with transom; central hall plan; wide boxed eaves; two interior brick chimneys

Lot 11, 1895 BA-121-15
Victorian cottage; clapboarded; one and a half story; cross gables; one story gabled bay projects north half of facade, one and a half story gable flush with facade south half, latter gable has paired 6/6 windows; attached hip roof porch extends from south side of bayed gable across facade, turned posts and balusters; bayed gable has pent, shingles, square louvered vent; pent across gable north elevation, pair 6/6 windows; exterior chimney north side

Lot 10, 1901 BA-121-7
Victorian cottage; one story; clapboarded; gable roof sides with bayed gables projecting north and south ends, each with pent, square louvered vent; north bayed gable has three 1/1 windows, south one screened and part of recessed porch which butts south side of the north bayed gable; porch has square posts, balusters; gable ell north rear; stuccoed chimney north side; solid brick wall foundation.

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Lot 7, c. 1890

BA-121-19

Corner Buerger Lane and Highway 98; facade faces north; one story; high hip roof; recessed porch northeast corner, turned posts, balusters, screened, pair 6/6 windows west side of facade; two sets french doors under porch; concrete block piers with brick infill (asbestos siding)

Lot 6, c. 1925

BA-121-23

One and a half story; drop siding; gable on hip roof, slate; recessed porch wraps around facade and south side, square posts and screened; french doors and Craftsman windows in facade; gabled dormers north and south elevations; Craftsman window in gable at facade; two brick chimneys, one interior and one exterior, corbeled caps

Noncontributing (2)

Lot 8, c. 1945

One story; gable roof sides; portico under construction; paired Craftsman windows; filled porch; asbestos siding

Lot 9, c. 1980

One story; cross gable; board and batten; paired 6/6 windows; attached hip roof porch north side; garage rear; two exterior chimneys

Refer to Map 1. Buildings are described from south to north and are keyed by the lot number and the Baldwin County photograph log.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Recreation

Specific dates 1842 - 1927 **Builder/Architect** Unknown/Various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C-Architecture:

The Battles Wharf Historic District is significant for its collection of summer residences in a variety of modest local styles which span the years from the 1840s to the 1920s. These houses are unified by the bayfront, which serves as the focus for the community's life, as seen by the buildings main entrances facing out to the bay. Concessions to climate and location such as wide central halls and rain porches are exhibited.

Criterion A-Recreation:

The Battles Wharf Historic District is significant as a summer resort for Mobilians dating back to the 1840s. The natural advantages of the waterfront lots included swimming, sailing, and fishing. These lots were linked together by a public road along the bay which reinforced the local sense of community and emphasized the water orientation. This road, originally used to deliver supplies from the bayboats, later became a walkway and significantly contributed to the resort ambience. Many vacation cottages were constructed, some of which survive (examples Lots 12, 18, & 22). Battles remains a summer retreat to this day with some 20% of the houses serving as rental property.

Historical Summary:

The Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay has considerably higher elevation than the western shore and has long served as a summer retreat for Mobilians. During the 18th century, French planters farmed and raised cattle at the Village (now Daphne) and British soldiers convalesced at Montrose on the high bluffs. The area including Point Clear and Battles was part of a Spanish Land Grant (1800) to one Eugene La Valle. The United States gained possession of Mobile and lands east to the Perdido River in 1813. This was the only territory acquired by the United States during the War of 1812.

Shortly afterwards the area around Point Clear attracted settlers. As early as 1822 there was a resort hotel at Point Clear catering to Mobilians and a scattering of residents to the north and south. One of the most prominent settlers north of the point was Robert R. Dade who came over from Mobile in 1849.

(cont'd)

9. Major Bibliographical References

The Fairhope Courier. Battles, Alabama. January 1, 1895 and January 15, 1895.

Scott, F.D., Battles Wharf & Point Clear. Mobile, Alabama: Lithographed by Interstate 2, 1971.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property App. 34 acres.

Quadrangle name Point Clear Quad.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6
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4	1	1	2	4	0
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3	3	7	3	4	1	5
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Verbal boundary description and justification The Battles Wharf Historic District stretches for approximately .4 miles (from just north of Woolworth Avenue to just north of Buerger Lane) between Highway 98 Scenic Route on the east and the shore of Mobile Bay on the west. The boundary includes houses and a public walkway that are historically part of Battles Wharf and maintain its historic integrity.

List all states and counties for properties overliapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Sledge/Architectural Historian

organization Mobile Historic Development Commission date September 29, 1987

street & number P. O. Box 1827 telephone (205) 438-7281

city or town _____ state _____


12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date March 8, 1988

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date

4/28/88

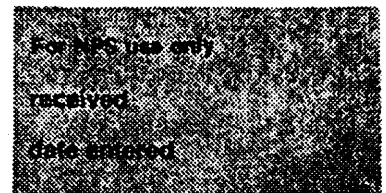
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Though he constructed his house east of the present Highway 98, he gave a bayfront lot to each of his six daughters. This small nucleus of settlement was referred to as Dadeville, then Battles (for the Battle family of Mobile who made extensive purchases in the area), and beginning in 1904, as Battles Wharf.

The development of Point Clear and Battles differed in that Point Clear with its exposure to the prevailing southwesterly winds, was settled by private individuals of wealth and power while Battles, with less favorable geographic placement, developed a modest hotel trade dependent on less wealthy Mobilians brought over by the bayboats. Though there were a few private summer homes at Battles, most of the cottages were rental.

In 1847 the earlier resort hotel on the point was replaced by the Grand Hotel. This resort hotel, through a succession of buildings, catered to the elite of Mobile and New Orleans and continues operation today as a Marriott Hotel (the present building dates from the 1940s).

During the Civil War a number of homes along the bay sheltered Confederate wounded and a few were even shelled by Union gunboats. None of these houses survive. By 1875 Battles had a post office, which contributed to a sense of independent identity from Point Clear to the south. Point Clear Creek separated the two communities.

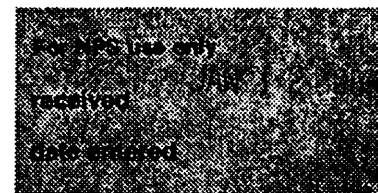
By 1881 Battles had a general store operated by Aaron Moog and Sam Weil. Moog and Weil depended on the bayboats from Mobile to keep them supplied. These steamboats made daily calls all along the Eastern Shore before returning to Mobile.

When the Single-Taxers from Iowa bought land on the Eastern Shore for their utopian community,¹ they boarded with Mobilians at Battles Wharf until they were able to build houses on their townsite just a few miles to the north. The Fairhope Courier, the Single-Taxer's newspaper, was published at Battles for several months. The Courier informed its readers, many of whom were Single-Taxers in other states, that "from Fairhope to way below Point Clear there is an almost continuous line of cottages on the bayfront each with its bathhouses on the beach." (Fairhope Courier, January 15, 1895). Battles Wharf itself "...stretches along the shore for nearly a mile with the beach on one side of its principal thoroughfare and on the other a row of low white washed cottages with wide galleries

¹See Fairhope Multiple Resource Nomination, 1987.

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looking out upon the bay." (Ibid.) The Fairhoppers also took note of the rain porch, "across the entire front of the house extends a front gallery eight feet wide and beyond this the roof extends four or six feet supported by posts planted in the earth." (Ibid., January 1, 1895).

Though their townsite was an overgrown pasture, the Fairhoppers were late-comers to the Eastern Shore. The Courier noted, "The reputation of this shore as a summer resort is already well established. Many wealthy merchants of Mobile have fine summer homes at Point Clear, Battles, Montrose and Daphne." (Ibid.) Summer was the high season and the Courier commented that "...everything that will afford shelter from the rain is pressed into service to accommodate Mobilians who seek this shore for its excellent bathing, boating and fishing and its health giving breezes from the salt water and piney woods." (Ibid.)

By 1915 Battles Wharf had a district school, churches, an orphanage, rental cottages and two hotels, all located along the shore. Three bayboats called daily, ensuring plenty of guests for the hotels. The Battles Hotel (1910-1934) boasted twenty-five rooms, a wharf and dance pavilion. The Beach Hotel (1904-1931), a rambling frame structure with towers and battlements, also had a wharf and dance pavilion. The completion of the causeway (1927) into Mobile diverted tourist traffic away from Battles Wharf and the hotels were forced to close. Before construction of the causeway, travelers between Mobile and Florida found the wharfs in Fairhope and Battles the most convenient jump-off points to cross Mobile Bay. The causeway provided a motor route to the north and eliminated this traffic, forcing the bayboats out of business with subsequent economic consequences for hotels. By World War II only the Grand Hotel survived though rental cottages still abounded.

Battles Wharf never incorporated. The resort ambience is preserved to this day as Mobilians continue to summer along the bayfront. Today approximately 20% of the cottages continue to be used as rental property. During the 1970s and 1980s condominium and townhouse development spread all along the Eastern Shore and the area became a bedroom community for Mobile.

Battles Wharf Historic District
Baldwin County, Alabama
Scale: 1"=400'

