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United States Department of the Interior  
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# National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

AUG 21 1991  
MAY 29 1991

Ala. Historical **NATIONAL REGISTER**

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

### A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

SPANISH REVIVAL RESIDENCES IN MOBILE, 1904-1929

### B. Associated Historic Contexts

THE SPANISH REVIVAL STYLE IN MOBILE, 1904-1929

### C. Geographical Data

Boundaries of the City of Mobile, Mobile County, Alabama.

See continuation sheet

### D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official

5-22-91

Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

7/12/91

Date

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## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

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Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

### Spanish Revival Residences in Mobile, 1904-1929

The genesis of the Spanish Revival Style cannot be firmly associated with any particular architect. It came into vogue during the 1890s, partly inspired by the California Building at the 1893 Chicago Fair (which reflected Spanish influences of the Colonial Southwest). It spread in popularity after being highlighted in architect's and builder's magazines of the day.

Initially this new architecture was called Mission Revival and was closely patterned after the Mission Churches of the 17th and 18th centuries. Spurred by the Panama-California Exposition (1915) the architectural borrowing extended beyond the Mission Churches and included Spanish and Italian domestic architecture as well as Islamic elements. By the 1920s Mission Revival only narrowly defined a genre that also included Mediterranean Revival, Bungalow and Spanish Revival (which captures the scope of the style best).

By the 1920s hundreds of Spanish Revival buildings had sprouted in California and Florida (where the riches of the land boom made it the choice of millionaires) and even in inland states with no Spanish heritage. The style evoked images of fun in the sun and relaxation. In addition, the popularity of the style among Hollywood movie stars made it seem like a fantasy realized. Resort hotels constructed during the 1920s were like as not to be Spanish Revival and many towns had a movie theatre in the style. Besides the palaces of the fabulously rich, many modest homes were constructed in the style from coast to coast. Organizations such as the Architect's Small House Service Bureau popularized Spanish Revival house plans, touting their "Spanish origin plus American convenience" and "abundance of closets." These plans were widely circulated in newspapers and magazines.

The style began to wane during the 1930s as Americans embraced other architectural expressions and building modes. In addition the Crash of 1929 severely restricted new construction.

The Spanish Revival came early to Mobile and was enthusiastically embraced. The city's Latin heritage (it had been ruled by France and Spain for most of the 18th century) and semi-tropical climate meshed well with this latest architectural fad. Turn of the century Mobile was dominated by Victorian and Neo-Classical houses and public buildings. The Spanish Revival arrived just when many new subdivisions were being developed

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and became the style of choice. One of the first in the style to be constructed was the residence of George Fearn, a prominent local subdivision developer who would popularize the Spanish Revival in Mobile. Fearn chose local architect George Rogers to design his new home, which was built in 1904 in Mobile's Loop area. Set back from the street the two story house featured a central Mission parapet, red tile roof and interior art glass.

Indeed, by the turn of the century Mobile had finally begun to recover from the devastation of the Civil War, and would steadily grow over the next few decades. From after the war to 1900 the population hovered around 30,000 but this figure rapidly increased during the first twenty years of the twentieth century. By 1910 there were over sixty thousand residents. Mobile's townscape improved with electric streetcars, improved city planning and beautification programs. By 1913 over four thousand passengers were riding the streetcars, which encouraged suburban development. More importantly for the economic development of Mobile were the expanding rail yards and the dock facilities. After the disastrous lessons of dependence on cotton, a more diversified economy was pursued. Timber, fruit and coal became important commodities for the port of Mobile. By 1926 the Alabama State Docks had been officially authorized and constructed. The Waterman Steamship Company was headquartered in Mobile and was one of the most powerful shipping lines in the world. All of this economic diversification and growth increased Mobile's population and the city expanded steadily to the west.

If Mobilians failed to take notice of George Fearn's impressive residence, they could not fail to be awed by the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad Depot (NR), built in 1906 from a design by Atlanta architect P. Thronton Marye. Erected at a cost of over half a million dollars, the depot

featured a first story arcade, Plateresque carving and a ribbed dome. The building's grounds were planted in rows of palm trees. The GM and O was the first important Spanish Revival public building in Alabama.

While the GM and O was still under construction, George Rogers completed a new design for the Government Street Methodist Church (NR). The resulting facade seemed more appropriate to a Catholic Church, being in the Churrigueresque mode with a high Baroque feeling. In 1916 architect C.L. Hutchisson, Sr.'s Robinson Memorial looked like a smaller version of the Alamo.

With so many landmark examples of the style at hand, it is no wonder that by the 1920s Mobile's homebuilders were constructing Spanish Revival houses (of varying degrees of sophistication) in the expanding suburbs. Florence Place, platted in 1926, was to be a theme neighborhood consisting

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of all Spanish Revival houses. Buyer intransigence and the Depression spoiled the plan, though many Spanish Revival houses were indeed built.

In 1927 the Mobile Country Club was built in the style and at least three houses in the exclusive neighboring development were Spanish Revival as well. The local press was full of the virtues of the style and at least one local company sold "Espanol Roofing Tile."

By the 1930s, in Mobile as elsewhere, the Spanish Revival style had run its course. Various aspects of the style remained popular however (especially stucco) and were freely applied to other styles of architecture.

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F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

- 1.) Residential
- 2.) Description

Architectural classifications are rarely absolute. Styles and types blend with other styles and types creating a varied and confusing tableau. Though high style buildings are usually easily categorized, popular expressions tend to be more eclectic. This is particularly true with the Spanish Revival Style which is referred to by a variety of different names including Mission, Spanish Colonial, Spanish Eclectic and Mediterranean Revival. To add to the confusion, popular magazines and newspapers of the day often added the word "bungalow" to one or another of the terms, as in "Spanish Colonial Bungalow."

"Mission Revival" was clearly the earliest manifestation of the style, beginning in the 1890s. By World War One "Mission Revival" no longer accurately described the variety of Hispanic and Mediterranean architectural elements at play. In an effort to capture this diversity, this multiple resource nomination uses "Spanish Revival" in an inclusive spirit, taking in the easily recognizable Mission Revival as well as subtler evolutions.

Whether the house be high style or low, the ceramic tile roof and white stucco walls are the most distinguishing features. Other important elements include Mission parapets with coping, towers, arcades, clustered drainage pipes, sculptural ornament (particularly on high style examples), Spanish ironwork on porches and balconies, courtyards, interior arches and exposed stained wood. Floorplans tend to be irregular.

One of Mobile's earliest and most significant Spanish Revival buildings is the Fearn House-Century 21 Building (1904) at 1806 Airport Blvd. This high style, architect designed example includes many classic features of the genre including a hip, ceramic tile roof, stuccoed walls, Mission parapet and exposed woodwork. Another local high style example, the Morrison-Walker House (1926), include a courtyard with decorative iron gate, arcaded porch and interior arches.

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Mobile's modest Spanish Revival houses are distinguished by their ceramic roofs, stucco walls, clustered drainage pipes, interior and exterior arches and tile porches. More unusual features include a window balcony and arched wing wall (VanderSys-Cloninger House, 1926). While a ceramic roof and stucco walls are enough to convey a Spanish feel, all of Mobile's Spanish Revival houses include other aspects of the style.

In addition to the architectural elements, landscape considerations play a significant role in distinguishing Mobile's Spanish Revival houses. Most of these houses were constructed in expanding suburbs where developers carefully planned the streetscapes. Set backs in Florence Place, Country Club Estates and the Loop were regulated as were square footage and the minimum cost of each dwelling. Curbing and guttering were in place before construction began and in the case of Florence Place, street lamps were provided, as was a fountain (long since filled in for a flower bed). All of these efforts helped create a special ambience that enhanced the distinctiveness, and property value, of these houses.

3.) Significance

The residential Spanish Revival properties included within this type are significant under National Register Criteria C as important high style and middle class interpretations of the style. They are further significant for their high degree of interior and exterior integrity as well as original landscaping. The Fearn House-Century 21 Building (1904) is an important early manifestation of the style in Mobile designed by architect George Rogers, whereas the houses along Florence Place (Walker-Kimbrough House (1926), VanderSys-Cloninger House (1926) etc.) are typical 1920s middle class expressions of the style inspired by plans in popular magazines.

4.) Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for this multiple resource nomination, a property must be a clear example of the Spanish Revival

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style. It must feature enough elements of the style, for example Mission parapets, stucco walls, ceramic tile roof, interior and exterior arches, or a courtyard, so as to be unmistakably Spanish in inspiration and feel. In addition, each property must retain its integrity of location, design and plan. Finally, the property must have been originally constructed to serve as a residence.

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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Robert Gamble. The Alabama Catalog. University, University of Alabama Press. 1987.

Elizabeth B. Gould, From Fort to Port: An Architectural History of Mobile, 1711-1918. University, University of Alabama Press. 1988.

Alan Gowans. The Comfortable House. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Pres. 1986.

The Mobile Daily Register, 1924-1930.

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: Mobile Historic Development Commission

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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### Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

This Spanish Revival Multiple Properties Nomination is a direct outgrowth of the Mobile Historic Building Survey. This survey was conducted during 1988 by John Sledge, Architectural Historian with the Mobile Historic Development Commission, through a grant from the Alabama Historical Commission. During the course of the survey, every structure over fifty years of age in the city limits was recorded. From this data base (which includes over 2500 buildings) National Register priorities were determined by the Mobile Historic Development Commission office. National Register nominations completed in 1989 included expansion of the Oakleigh Garden District and a Multiple Properties Nomination of buildings designed by a local family of architects through four generations. After completion of these projects, phase two National Register priorities were initiated for 1990. Among this second tier of nominations is the multiple group of Spanish Revival architecture in the city.

Many of Mobile's Spanish Revival houses are located in areas of the city which underwent sub-urban development in the 1920s. Mobile's Latin heritage made the Spanish Revival a natural choice and many of these buildings are classic expressions of the style. In addition, many are located in neighborhoods largely untouched by the National Register. Because of the quality of the buildings, and their importance to the early 20th century development of the city, it was decided to include them in a multiple properties nomination.