

PH0020061

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: ALABAMA	
COUNTY: DALLAS	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 8 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:
Cahaba

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Cahawba

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
11 miles SW of Selma at junction of Cahaba and Alabama Rivers

STATE Alabama	CODE 01	COUNTY: Dallas	CODE 047
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Multiple Public and Private

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Selma

STATE:
Alabama

CODE:
01

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Dallas County Probate Office, Dallas County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:
Lauderdale Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Selma,

STATE:
Alabama 36701

CODE:
01

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Building Survey (HAB 1935)

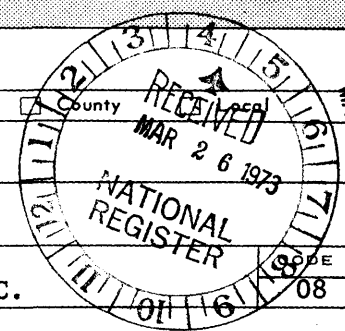
DATE OF SURVEY: **1935** Federal State County

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
D.C.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Cahaba, also spelled Cahawba, is located slightly south of the juncture of the Cahaba and Alabama rivers on the west side of the Alabama River about fourteen miles south of Selma. The landmark was the site of Alabama's first permanent capital from 1820 to 1826.

There are a few scattered structural evidences surviving in the town. Part of the walls and a column of the Methodist Church built in 1849 still remain after a fire in 1954. The Fambro House built in 1840 by Judge William W. Fambro is still used as a dwelling. Columns of the Crocheron Mansion still stand, along with street markers and a cemetery.

In its heyday, Cahaba was a thriving city with the capitol building as its focal point. The town had numerous shops, warehouses, hotels, boarding houses, homes, schools, and the like required for a state capital city and busy river port. There were a number of fine mansions among which particularly notable were the homes of the merchants Crocheron and Perine. The palatial Perine Mansion had one of the first if not the first air-conditioning systems developed in the South. Water from the deepest artesian well in the world (900 feet) was pumped through pipes in the walls of the 26 rooms to cool the house. The Crocheron House was the site of the meeting between General James H. Wilson and General Nathan Bedford Forrest to exchange prisoners after the battle of Selma on April 2, 1865.

The Alabama Historical Commission and the Cahaba Historical Commission plan to create an interpretive historical and recreational park on the site.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

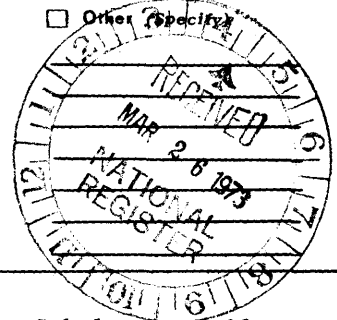
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The first permanent capital of Alabama was located at Cahaba in Dallas County. Cahaba was probably the site of the Indian village of Casiste which DeSoto passed in 1540. It is thought also to be the site of a trading fort built in the early 18th century by officers of the Parisian merchant Crozart who in 1730 was granted the area by King Louis XV. The fort was soon abandoned and little was heard about the site until 1816 when it was established as an election district of Montgomery County.

In 1818 the territorial legislature meeting at St. Stephens created a commission headed by Clement Clay to recommend a site for a permanent capital of Alabama. According to William H. Brantley, author of Three Capitals, the Commission recommended to Governor William Wyatt Bibb that Tuscaloosa be made the permanent capital. Whether this is true or not, Bibb practically forced the selection of Cahaba upon the legislature by securing a 1620-acre land grant to the state for establishing the state government at the site. In 1818 Dallas County was established and Cahaba became the county seat the following year.

Willis Roberts and Benjamin Clements were appointed by Governor Bibb to survey the site and lay out a town. In May, 1819, the first land auction was held, and 182 lots were sold for \$123,856 of which \$30,964 was in cash which went into the State treasury. The legislature appropriated \$10,000 for a capitol building to be completed by June, 1820. The building, a two-story brick building, was 158 feet long and 43 feet wide and was located at the corner of Capitol Avenue and Vine Street.

While Cahaba was being established, Huntsville became the temporary capital of Alabama and was the site of the first constitutional convention. One provision of the Constitution stated that Cahaba would be the permanent capital unless another town was selected in five years. A powerful faction in North Alabama was determined that Cahaba would not remain the capital of Alabama.

Before the first session of the Alabama legislature in November, 1820, Governor William Wyatt Bibb died as a result of a riding accident, and Cahaba lost its most influential champion. His brother Thomas Bibb became acting governor, but Thomas came from Limestone County in the Tennessee Valley and did not share William Bibb's championship of the Alabama - Cahaba river faction.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brantley, William H., Three Capitals, A Book About the First Three Capitals of Alabama, St. Stephens, Huntsville, and Cahawba. Boston: Merrymont Press, 1947.

Hobbs, Sam Earle, "History of Early Cahaba, Alabama's First State Capital" The Alabama Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXXI, Nos. 3 & 4, 1969.

Moore, Albert B., History of Alabama, University, Alabama: Alabama Book Store, 1950.

Summersell, C. G., History of Alabama, Birmingham, Alabama: Colonial Press 1961.

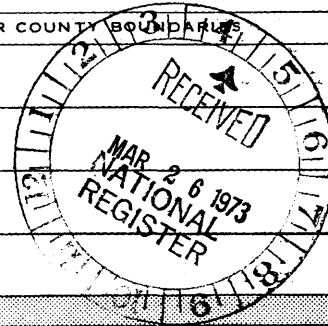
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	32° 20' 12"	87° 07' 00"		0	0	
NE	32° 20' 12"	87° 05' 32"				
SE	32° 18' 22"	87° 05' 32"				
SW	32° 18' 22"	87° 07' 00"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **853 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **W. Warner Floyd, Executive Director**

ORGANIZATION: **Alabama Historical Commission** DATE: **March 13, 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER: **305 South Lawrence St.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Montgomery** STATE: **Alabama** CODE: **01**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name Miles B. Toward, Jr.

Title SLO for historic preservation

Date March 15, 1973

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Robert M. Utley
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 5/8/73

ATTEST: W. J. [Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date 4 26 73

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Alabama	
COUNTY	Dallas	
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		MAY 8 1973

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (Continued)

Cahaba grew rapidly between 1820 and 1825. The State Supreme Court was organized with Clement C. Clay as Chief Justice. A state bank was set up with a \$2,000,000 capitalization. General Lafayette was entertained there in 1825 during his tour through the state. Unfortunately 1825 was the year of the great flood which inundated the city. Part of the Statehouse crumbled during the flood. As a result the legislature voted to move the capital to Tuscaloosa which was done in 1826.

Cahaba practically became a ghost town. The legislature instructed the State Treasurer to sell the capitol building for not less than \$3,000. When no buyer could be found, the structure was given to Dallas County in 1829 for use as a courthouse. In 1834 Dallas County constructed a new courthouse within Arch Street at the corner of Vine and First Avenue North. In 1837 the capital lot and the one next to it were sold to Matthew Gage for \$349.50. In all probability the Capitol had been torn down and the material used in the new courthouse.

Cahaba revived around 1830 only to suffer another disastrous flood in 1833. In the 1840's and 1850's the town became the commercial, social, and shipping center of the rich Black Belt area surrounding it. Its importance was increased in 1859 by the construction of the railroad from Marion to Cahaba which brought a greater volume of goods into Cahaba to be shipped on the Alabama River.

During the Civil War there was a large Confederate prison located at Cahaba. Shortly before the end of the war another flood inundated the town and as a result in the following year, 1866, the county seat was moved to Selma. The town slowly died after that, and by the turn-of-the-century Cahaba was a ghost town.

