

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**



**1. Name of Property**

historic name Water Avenue Historic District  
other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number Water Avenue bounded by Lauderdale, MLK Blvd, Beech Creek, Alabama River not for publication N/A  
city or town Selma vicinity N/A  
state Alabama code AL county Dallas code 047 zip code 36701

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kenneth Ambrose, Deputy State Historic Officer 5/25/05  
Signature of certifying official/Title 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 for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Daniel J. Vison 7/7/05  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

for \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action

Water Avenue Historic District  
Name of Property

Dallas Co., AL  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
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45	5	buildings
1		sites
		structures
1		objects
47	5	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/hotel

TRANSPORTATION/train depot

COMMERCE/warehouse

COMMERCE/specialty store

COMMERCE/business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/business

DOMESTIC/hotel

VACANT

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

COMMERCE/restaurant

COMMERCE/specialty store

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Italianate

Queen Anne

Romanesque Revival

Renaissance Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK, STONE: Limestone

WOOD: Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT, METAL

other METAL: Cast iron

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property approximately 10

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
1	<u>16</u>	<u>498100</u>	<u>3585340</u>	4	<u>16</u>	<u>498800</u>	<u>3585230</u>
2	<u>16</u>	<u>498710</u>	<u>3585620</u>	5	<u>16</u>	<u>498150</u>	<u>3585200</u>
3	<u>16</u>	<u>498880</u>	<u>3585420</u>	6	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Susan A. Besser

organization Franklin Preservation Group date March 2002

street & number 252 Fourth Avenue South telephone 615-790-6457

city or town Franklin state TN zip code 37064

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Multiple

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations N/A**

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 year of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce  
 Architecture  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

c. 1837; c. 1855; 1860-1952  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

c. 1865  
 c. 1837  
 c. 1855

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)  
 NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

NA  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A**

- 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

Name of repository:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

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Water Avenue Historic District  
Dallas County, Alabama

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### **WATER AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT STREET ADDRESSES**

Lafayette Park—2

Green Street—2

Martin Luther King Boulevard—4

Washington Street—2

Water Avenue—1000-1002, 1001, 1004, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1010, 1012, 1014, 1015, 1110, 1112, 1118-1124, 1200, 1201, 1203, 1205, 1207-1211, 1217-1221, 1220, 1223-1225, 1224, 1300, 1301, 1302, 1303, 1304, 1306, 1308, 1310-1318, Rear 1310, 1400, 1407, 1410, 1411, 1414, 1416, 1417, 1500, 1505, 1510, 1512, 1514-1516, 1601

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INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

AGRICULTURE/storage

RECREATION AND CULTURE/commemorative marker

RECREATION AND

CULTURE/commemorative marker

INDUSTRY/communications facility

INDUSTRY/communications facility

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Water Avenue Historic District  
Dallas County, Alabama

## 7. Narrative Description

Water Avenue Historic District is generally bounded by Old Town Historic District to the north and west, with the north side of Water Avenue between Broad and Washington the southernmost point of Old Town Historic District, Martin Luther King Boulevard and Beech Creek to the east and the Alabama River to the south. Within these boundaries are all or parts of the following streets: Broad Street, Lafayette Park, Martin Luther King Boulevard, Washington Avenue, and Water Avenue.

On the south side of Water Avenue Historic District from the west boundary to Broad Street is a two story commercial block of late nineteenth century buildings of the Italianate and Renaissance Revival era. The most imposing of the buildings is the Selma Times-Journal Building at 1014 Water Avenue, c. 1870 (17). This Italianate two-story five bay two-part commercial stucco building has a projecting bracketed cornice with an elaborate triangular pediment embellished with finials surmounting a modillion course. This building is so pivotal to the commercial architectural heritage of Selma that The People's Bank building at 420 Broad Street, ca. 1980, echoes the robust Eastlake character of the building. Two Renaissance Revival buildings The Harmony Club, 1007 Water Avenue (13) and 1008 Water Avenue (14) exhibit the dichromatic masonry typical of the style as well as stepped arches and arched loggia.

The architecture of the south side of Water Avenue between Broad Street and Lafayette Park exhibits the variations in the Italianate style. The two-story brick two-part commercial block building at 1110 Water Avenue, c. 1880 (19) displays an arcaded pediment treatment within the parapet. Pilasters flow from the first story to denticulated molding on the two-story two-part commercial block building at 1112 Water Avenue, c. 1880 (19). Arched hood molds with corbeling over two-over-two windows are indicative of the Italianate style. The corner building of this block at 1118-1124 Water Avenue, c. 1880 (21) is a two-story, seven bay brick two-part commercial block with a deep bracketed cornice and rusticated stone pilasters on plinths.

The St. James Hotel, c. 1837, is a three-story building of masonry construction with stepped parapet walls. Considered to be one of the few remaining river hotels in the southeast this building occupies the corner of Water Avenue and Lafayette Park. East of the St. James Hotel are two c. 1900 two-story brick two-part commercial buildings with triangular pedimented parapets.

From Franklin Street to Green Street are two-story warehouse buildings connected to the c. 1855 three-story Greek Revival Eddystone Hotel that displays a denticulated pediment. Two-story warehouses of the late nineteenth century occupy the block from Green Street to Lawrence Street. East to Martin Luther King

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Central to the Water Avenue Historic District are the buildings on the north side from Washington Street to Franklin Street. The Phoenix Building, presently a façade, is the pivotal building of the block displays an elaborate pediment. The two-story, three bay façade, two-part commercial block with cast iron front retains the original fenestration. The buildings surrounding the Phoenix Building date from 1860 to 1870 and were a central part of the business district during the Reconstruction era. The buildings retain their historic wood storefronts.

Separate buildings and sites that are included in this nomination are The Depot Museum/Louisville and Nashville Railroad Depot that is of the Romanesque Revival style, the Confederate Foundry, a complex of three buildings, and the Johnson Bros. Store.

Water Avenue Historic District encompasses the buildings that were central to the early development of Selma and the downtown commercial center. A small portion of the inventory dates prior to the Civil War. Water Avenue Historic District has a high degree of integrity within the mid-nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century period.

The non-contributing buildings in the district include commercial buildings constructed after 1950 and buildings that have been unsympathetically altered. Altered storefronts and warehouses have non-historic materials covering the façade.

### Archeological Component

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this district area, the potential for subsurface remains is good. Buried portions may contain significant information that may be useful in interpreting the entire area.

### Inventory

Information for the inventory was compiled from historic research and field surveys by Susan A. Besser, preservation consultant. During 2001 Ms. Besser did a thorough survey of the entire district, photographing and describing both the contributing and non-contributing buildings. Most construction dates are circa, based on period of development of the particular street on, which is located, and the architectural characteristics of the building. In the cases of exact dates, there were obtained by tax work and local historical sources.

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### Inventory Key

Each property description begins with an inventory number (these run upward sequentially), then features the name of the house or business, then the street address, then the date, architectural style, architectural description, frame and roll number of the photograph depicting the property in the files of the Alabama Historic Commission, and last "C" for contributing and "NC" for non-contributing.

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- 1 Bridgetender's House, 2 Lafayette Park, 1885. Queen Anne. L-shaped, one-and-one half story, two bay façade, frame, front and side gable roof of standing seam metal, brick foundation. Façade flush board. Full-width flat roof entry porch with scroll-sawn frieze, turned columns and flat-cut balustrade and railings. Single door entrance with stained glass. Windows 2/2. One interior brick chimney. 30 2 C
- 2 2 Green Street, One-story gable front brick building, c. 1880, with standing seam metal roof, double door entrance flanked by 2/2 windows, one-story shed roof concrete block addition, c. 1940. 1 5 C
- 3 Confederate Naval Foundry & Iron Works, Martin Luther King Boulevard, c. 1863. Three buildings of brick construction with gable roof of standing seam metal, windows 6/6 with brick relieving arch, brick buttresses and terminate in corbeled cornice, gable roof clerestory follows ridge of roof. 20 1 C, 19 1 C, 18 1 C.
- 4 Southern Railway Complex, Martin Luther King Boulevard, c. 1880. One-and-one-half story gable front building with full arched loading docks, standing seam metal roof supported by wood trussing, piers. 14 1 C
- 5 Railway Express, 4 Martin Luther King Boulevard, c. 1890. Romanesque Revival. One-story brick building with hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves, triangular knee braces, windows covered. 11 1 C
- 6 Old Depot Museum/Louisville & Nashville Railroad Depot, 4 Martin Luther King Boulevard, c. 1890. Romanesque Revival. Two-story with one-story wings, brick building with hipped roof and stone foundation. Off-center double door four-panel door entrance with transom. Large triangular knee braces support attached hipped roof canopy. Windows 1/1. Second story windows 1/1 with stone lintels. Belt course with cyma reversa molding. Denticulated cornice with brackets terminating in shaped parapet. Decorative triple arches within shaped parapet. Two-and-one-half story tower with bell-shaped roof, one brick chimney. 12 1 C
- 7 2 Washington Street, c. 1880. Two-story brick two-part commercial block with denticulated pediment. First story fenestration double two-pane doors with transom and arched lintel to north, three multi-pane display windows to south, two covered. Attached metal canopy. Second story fenestration 6/ 6 windows. 5 1 C

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Dallas County, Alabama

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- 8 1001 Water Avenue, c. 1970. One-story flat roof stucco building, flat roof porte coche're , double door plate glass entrance surrounded by fixed glass. 36 1 NC
- 9 Bienville Park, Water Avenue, c. 1930. Stone with commemorative plaque cites designation of Selma as Bienville in 1732. 36 3 C
- 10 1000-1002 Water Avenue, c. 1880. Two-part two bay brick commercial block. Central entrance plate glass door provides access to second story, c. 1950. East bay display windows on wood bulkhead with plate glass entry. Transoms covered with mosaic tile, c. 1950. West bay bulkhead of mosaic tile with display windows, transoms and plate glass door framed in metal, c. 1950. 20 2 C
- 11 1004 Water Avenue, c. 1880. Two-story two-part brick commercial block with corbel table at parapet. First story originally had two entrances of double leaf doors. East entrance replaced with single door with sidelight and arched fanlight. West entrance replaced with louvered shutters and arched fanlight with brick flower box. Fenestration second story half windows with cast iron sills and arched lintels with brick relieving arch. 21 2 C
- 12 1006 Water Avenue, c. 1880. Two-story two-part brick commercial block with stucco exterior with corbel table along parapet. Cast iron gates within arched opening provide access to second story. Display windows on brick bulkhead with multi-pane transom. Double door entrance with nine-pane transom. Attached shed roof canopy of standing seam metal supported by slender cast iron posts. Second story windows 2/2 with arched lintel. 22 2 C
- 13 The Harmony Club, 1007 Water Avenue, c. 1909. Renaissance Revival. Three-story, three bay façade, brick building with parapet. Central entrance of double leaf wood door with glazing, c. 1920, recessed into stone arch. Cast iron storefront with wood bulkhead to the east with entrance of double leaf wood doors with glazing. West bay has display window on brick bulkhead surmounted by transoms with single plate glass door entrance. Second story fenestration: central bay of three entrances with transom, doors replaced with c. 1920 wood doors. Windows 1/1 with cut stone lintels. Arcaded loggia central bay of third story. Arched windows 1/1 with stone archivolt third story. Stone quoins define bays. 35 1 C

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- 14 1008 Water Avenue, c. 1890. Renaissance Revival. Two-story two-part commercial block with stone detailing and stepped parapet with stone coping and denticulated cornice. Entrance to second story through stone arch with keystone. East and west bays with single doors with transom and display windows on brick bulkheads. East bay altered entry and transom. Second story windows 1/1 with rock faced stone lintel course. Modillion course surmounts sign "Established 1873." 23 2 C
- 15 1010 Water Avenue, c. 1870. Two-story two-part brick commercial block building with scored stucco exterior and flat roof with parapet. Paired windows surmounted by transom. Cast iron gates with segmental arched detailing to west. Double metal doors to east. Entrance fifteen-pane door with transom and sidelights. Second story fenestration 2/2 windows. Visible beneath stucco are segmental arched hood molds. 24 2 C
- 16 Woolsey Building, 1012 Water Avenue, c. 1880. Italianate. Two-story two-part commercial block. Projecting bracketed cornice modulating to triangular pediment. Corbel table and band molding above second story windows. Fenestration first story double doors with glazing and display windows on wood panel bulkhead with fluted cast iron columns and cast iron fluted pilasters. Second story windows 2/2 with bracketed triangular pedimented windows. Attached shed roof canopy of standing seam metal. 25 2 C
- 17 Selma Times-Journal Building, 1014 Water Avenue, c. 1870. Italianate. Two-story five bay two-part commercial block with stucco exterior over brick. Projecting bracketed cornice with triangular pediment embellished with finials surmounting modillion course. Fenestration comprised double doors with two-pane glazing surmounted by semi-circular fanlights and embellished with stepped arch surround. Second story windows 2/2 with elaborate bracketed hood molds. Quoins define corners. Attached shed roof porch of standing seam metal supported by slender metal posts. 26 2 C
- 18 1015 Water Avenue/1-3 Broad Street, c. 1900. Two-story, two-bay, two-part commercial block brick building with gable roof of standing seam metal and parapet wall. South bay recessed entrance with plate glass door. Fixed windows on brick bulkhead north and south of entrance, transoms covered. North bay with display windows, central entrance of double doors with glazing. Multi-pane transoms covered with wood. Original signboard intact surmounted by cornice. Second story windows 1/1. Corbel table within frieze. 33 1 C

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Water Avenue Historic District  
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- 19 1110 Water Avenue, c. 1880. Italianate. Two-story brick two-part commercial block. Arcaded pediment treatment within parapet. First story fenestration double two-panel doors with nine-pane glazing surmounted by transoms and cornice lintels. Second story fenestration features alternate 4/4 windows and two-panel doors with four-pane glazing surmounted by cornice lintels. Two-story gallery of cast iron with decorative frieze of descending circles along first story of gallery. 27 2 C
- 20 1112 Water Avenue, c. 1880. Italianate. Two-story brick two-part commercial block. Pilasters flow from first story to denticulated molding above second story windows. Elaborate bracketed cornice. First story fenestration double doors with two-pane glazing surmounted by arched hood molds with corbeling. Second story fenestration two window openings with arched hood molds. Extant windows 2/2 with window crowns. Attached arched canopy supported by cast iron posts. 28 2 C
- 21 1118-1124 Water Avenue, c. 1880. Italianate. Two-story, seven bay brick two-part commercial block with deep bracketed cornice. First story rusticated stone pilasters on plinths. Fenestration first story three pairs of double six-pane doors surmounted by multi-pane transoms and full arched transom. Center bay recessed entrance with transom and full arched transom. West bay three pairs double eight-pane doors with full arched transom. Attached shed roof canopy supported by slender cast iron columns. Modillioned cornice surmounts canopy. Fenestration second story 4/4 full arched windows with stone hood molds with keystone. 29 2 C
- 22 St. James Hotel, 1200 Water Avenue, 1837. Three-story masonry construction with stucco exterior. Stepped parapet walls and gable standing seam metal roof. Two-story hip roof gallery with cast iron support posts on first story and cast iron geometric patterned supports, cast iron foliated brackets and cast iron balustrade. Double doors with glazing provide entrance on Water Avenue and Lafayette Park. First story windows 2/2 with shutters. Second story and third story windows 9/6. 31 2 C
- 23 1201 Water Avenue, c. 1870. Three-story, two-part brick commercial block building with stepped parapet. Cornice entrance splays to double leaf doors with glazing. Display windows, c. 1950 on brick bulkheads. Shed roof metal canopy. Second story windows fixed glass with stone lintel. Windows 1/1 on west elevation. Windows 1/1 with cast iron cornices on third story. 32 1 C

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- 24 1203 Water Avenue, c. 1860-1870. Italianate. Two-story, three bay, two-part commercial block. Central entrance converted to window. Double leaf six-light doors with transoms on east and west bay. Transoms surmount display windows on wood bulkhead. Central entrance of double leaf doors with glazing and segmental arched transom on second story indicates balcony was original to building. Windows second story 4/4 with cast iron lintels. Denticulated pediment. 31 1 C
- 25 1205 Water Avenue, c. 1860-1870. Italianate. Two-story, one-bay brick two-part commercial block with cast iron pilasters. Three pairs of double leaf doors with glazing surmounted by transoms and one single door provide first story façade. Wood canopy, c. 1970. Fenestration second story arched 6/6 windows with stone hood molds with label stop. Denticulated pediment. 30 1 C
- 26 1207-1211 Water Avenue, c. 1860-1870. Greek Revival. Two-story, two bay brick two-part commercial block with cast iron pilasters. Double leaf doors with glazing surmounted by ten-pane transoms. Four-pane display windows on brick bulkhead. Central entrance leading to second story closed. Wood canopy with chamfered posts. Second story fenestration 4/4 windows with window crowns. Central four-panel door entrance second story indicates presence of balcony. Denticulated pediment. 29 1 C
- 27 Phoenix Building, 1217-1221 Water Avenue, c. 1860-1870. Italianate. Two-story, three-bay cast iron façade with pressed metal cornice of Tudor arched detail, eave brackets. Two-story gallery with lacy cast iron frieze, balustrade and porch supports. Double leaf doors with transoms and display windows. Windows second story segmental arched 4/4. 28 1 C
- 28 1220 Water Avenue, c. 1900. Two-story two-part brick commercial block with triangular pediment. First story under rehabilitation overseen by Alabama Historical Commission. Second story has multi-pane entrance in central bay. Windows 2/2 with stone lintels and sills. 32 2 C
- 29 1223-1225 Water Avenue, c. 1860-1870. Italianate. Two-story, two-bay brick two-part commercial block. West entrance double leaf doors with eight panes surmounted by transom. East entrance altered with non-period doors and transom surmounted by original transom. Display windows of nine panes on wood bulkheads. Two-story gallery with cast iron frieze, supports, and balustrade wraparounds around corner. Second story fenestration 4/4 windows surmounted by stone lintels. Bracketed cornice embellished with arch detail. Cast iron quoins. 27 1 C

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Water Avenue Historic District  
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- 30 1224 Water Avenue, 1930. Two-story two-part three bay brick commercial block with triangular shaped parapet with stone coping. Sanborn map indicates primary central entrance with attached canopy. Presence of single door with missing glazing and multi-pane transom surmounted by stone lintel in east bay indicates secondary entrance. West bay display windows with multi-pane transom, covered. Second story fenestration indicates three banks of windows with stone lintels. 33 2 C
- 31 1300 Water Avenue, c. 1900. Two-story two-part commercial block with parapet. Fenestration of first story indicates two openings with double doors and two windows. Second story fenestration covered with stucco. 34 2 C
- 32 1301 Water Avenue, c. 1958. One-story commercial building, stucco exterior over concrete block with flat roof with parapet. Entrance to east single plate glass door. Metal casement windows on west elevation. 26 1 NC
- 33 1302 Water Avenue, c. 1900. Two-story two-part commercial block with parapet. Original first story fenestration indicates three pairs of double doors with transoms not covered. Second story fenestration indicates window openings converted to vents and single door covered with tongue-and-groove paneling. 35 2 C
- 34 1303 Water Avenue, c. 1960. One-story brick commercial building with flat roof with parapet. Recessed entrance of double plate glass doors with transom. Fixed glass display windows on brick bulkhead. 25 1 NC
- 35 1304 Water Avenue, 1910. Two-story two-part commercial block with corbel table along parapet. First story reveals four full-height openings now covered with tongue-and-groove paneling. Second story openings reveal three windows and a door were original to building. 36 2 C
- 36 1306 Water Avenue, c. 1900. Two-story brick two-part commercial block covered with stucco, not of period. First story openings altered with vertical tongue-and-groove paneling were originally wood storefront. Second story windows altered with vents. 1 1 NC
- 37 1308 Water Avenue, c. 1855. Greek Revival. Three-story, one bay brick two-part commercial block with denticulated pediment. First story has single door with transom flanked by shutters. Display window on brick bulkhead to west. Windows 12/12. Cast iron balustrade second story. 23 3 C

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- 38 Eddystone Hotel, 1310-1318 Water Avenue, c. 1855. Greek Revival. Three-story four bay brick building with denticulated pediment. Fenestration of first story indicates double leaf doors with glazing, four pairs are intact. Wood infill covers east storefront bay and altered west storefront with original transoms. Fenestration of second and third story reveals evidence of symmetrically placed windows and doors surmounted by stone lintels. 3 1 C
- 39 1310 Water Avenue, Rear, c. 1905. One-story brick building with flat roof with parapet, double entrance, entrances to south have double brick relieving arches. 3 5 C
- 40 1400 Water Avenue, c. 1910. Two-story two-part commercial block with flat roof and denticulated parapet. First story has two loading bays with brick relieving arches altered by brick infill and double metal doors. Windows have arched lintel with brick relieving arches and are covered with shutters. 4 1 C
- 41 1407 Water Avenue, c. 1880. One-story, four bay façade, one part commercial block with shaped parapet. Brick piers. Original double leaf doors with transom intact. One bay has been altered with roll-up door. Vertical paneling covers display windows. 24 1 C
- 42 1410 Water Avenue, c. 1900. Two-story two-part commercial block with flat roof and denticulated pediment. Fenestration first story comprised of 4/4 windows with brick sills and brick relieving arches, single door entrances, and double door loading bays. Second story fenestration comprised of 4/4 windows with brick relieving arches with metal shutters. There are two brick interior chimneys. 5 1 C
- 43 1411 Water Avenue, c. 1900. One-story one-part commercial block building with stucco over brick and flat roof. Double plate glass doors with transoms and glass surround, c. 1950, provides entrance. East and west are large display windows with transom enframed in wood on a brick bulkhead. Original garage doors are east. 23 1 C
- 44 1414 Water Avenue, c. 1910. Two-story two-part commercial block with denticulated pediment, double multi-pane doors with multi-pane transom, flanked by 4/4 windows with brick sill. Second story two windows with metal shutters surmounted by arched lintels and brick relieving arches. 6 1 C
- 45 1416 Water Avenue, c. 1900. One-story brick commercial building, windows 6/6, central entrance double metal doors. 7 1 C

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- 46 1417 Water Avenue, c. 1890. One-story one-part commercial block building with stucco over brick and shaped parapet. Single plate glass door replaces original door and transom. Display windows enframed in wood on brick bulkhead. Garage bay has c. 1950 roll-up door. 22 1 C
- 47 1500 Water Avenue, c. 1920. One-story brick commercial block building with flat roof with parapet, fenestration comprises window with arched lintel (covered), display window (bricked), window (brick), arched bay brick and infill with single door, single door with transom (covered). 22 3 C
- 48 1505 Water Avenue, c. 1969. One-story brick L-shape commercial building with flat roof. Series of garage bays surmounted by transom. Dichromatic brickwork. Primary entrance on Green Street. 21 1 NC
- 49 1510 Water Avenue, c. 1930. One-story brick component of commercial block with parapet. Fenestration comprised of window (covered) with arched lintel, two-panel door with transom (covered) with arched lintel, central garage bay with original metal doors. 21 3 C
- 50 1512 Water Avenue, c. 1930. Two-story brick component of commercial block with parapet. First story windows (covered) with arched lintels, two-panel entrance doors with transom and arched lintel, central garage bay with c. 1960 roll-up door, brick relieving arches above windows and doors. Second story fenestration fifteen-pane metal awning windows, signboard. 9 1 C
- 51 Hardware & Building Supply, 1514-1516 Water Avenue, c. 1948. One-story, five bay brick one-part commercial block with stepped parapet. Display windows with transoms enframed in wood and metal on brick bulkhead. Two entrances with original wood double doors with glazing surmounted by transom. 10 1 C
- 52 Johnson Bros. Wholesale & Retail Grocers, 1601 Water Avenue, c. 1919, 1951. Two-story brick building with one-story wings. Display windows on brick bulkhead. Second story windows reconfigured for small windows. Balconet at southwest corner leads to single door. Signboard on south elevation "Johnson Bros. Wholesale & Retail Grocers." North addition, c. 1951 display windows on brick bulkhead, flat roof. Hipped roof addition south, c. 1951, corner entrance with multi-pane doors. 34 3 C

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Commerce (Criterion A)

The Water Avenue Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A for its local significance as a district comprised of commercial buildings that are primarily of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century which retains buildings of the ante-bellum and Reconstruction Era. Given the proximity of Water Avenue to the Alabama River and access to steamboat and ferry the siting of this commercial district on the river bluffs occurred as a natural outgrowth of the topographical setting. Location of the city wharf along the bank near the St. James Hotel in close proximity to the turnstile bridge provided necessary access to cotton plantations, warehouses and wholesale merchants. Historically, a secondary wharf servicing a flour mill and warehouse stood near the site of the present Selma Masonic Lodge in Old Town Historic District. Crucial to the county's economic viability the export of cotton necessitated the establishment of trading centers for cotton and receipt of consumer goods. Within the district is one of the few remaining river hotels in the southeast, The St. James Hotel, ca. 1837, pivotal to Selma's growth as a river town presently operates as an historic hotel. The turnstile bridge no longer spans the Alabama River, however, the Bridgetender's House on Lafayette Park testifies to the importance of the bridge to the local and regional economy.

### Architecture (Criterion C)

The Water Avenue Historic District is significant for its continuum of commercial architectural styles from the Greek Revival period to the mid-twentieth century. Represented in this district are Greek Revival, Italianate, and Renaissance Revival, mid-twentieth century vernacular commercial and one residential property, a Queen Anne cottage. Water Avenue properties exhibit the high style of commercial vernacular especially in the Italianate era exhibiting the exuberance of the era and displaying architecturally the economic viability of Selma.

The oldest surviving building is the St. James Hotel, a three-story masonry building of the Greek Revival era. Stepped parapet walls conceal the gable standing seam roof. "The iron railing (an elaborate cast iron foliated design) around the second story gallery," according to C. C. Grayson, "was in the style of all important buildings of that period."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>C. C. Grayson, *Yesterday and Today: Memories of Selma and Its People*, (New Orleans: Pelican Press. 1948.) 71.

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St. James Hotel functioned as a hotel until 1892 when competition from the Hotel Albert proved to be insurmountable; however, the building continued to function in other commercial endeavors. The three-story brick Greek Revival building at 1310-1318 Water Avenue (38), circa 1855, known historically as the Eddystone Hotel, exemplifies the restrained denticulated cornice and six-over-six windows with cast iron lintels of the era. The building retains the original French doors.

According to Alan Gowans the purpose of commercial architecture "from 1850s onward . . . was to promote an image of businesses associated with culture."<sup>2</sup> The architecture of the buildings in the Water Avenue Historic District from 1860 through 1930 reflects the awareness of commercial vernacular throughout the continent and, consequently, represents a continuum of western architectural heritage.

Pivotal to the Water Avenue Historic District are the buildings on the north side of the 1200 block of Water Avenue built circa 1860-1870. The façade of the Phoenix Building (27) of the Italianate era acts as a focal point of the block with its stamped sheet metal Tudor arched detailed pediment, intricate eave brackets and cast iron pilasters formed in paneled stiles. The original two-tiered gallery retains its elaborate cast iron frieze balustrade and porch supports. To the east of the Phoenix Building façade is a two story Italianate, 1223-1225 Water Avenue (29), with an elaborate pediment of pressed metal and keystone arches beneath a wide cornice. An intricate two-story gallery with cast iron frieze, spandrels and balustrade wraps around the corner of the façade. Buildings to the west exhibit the multi-paned storefronts that gained prominence in the 1860-1870 era. Displaying engaged fluted columns of cast iron, 1203 Water Avenue (24) illustrates the manner that cast iron front technology adapted to the commercial building.

The proximity of textile mills to cotton plantations near Selma in the 1880s created a business climate that supported numerous commercial enterprises; consequently Selma experienced a boom period in their economy relative to a rebuilding of Water Avenue Historic District. This presented an opportunity for expression of architectural form such as the Italianate and Renaissance Revival. The two-story commercial buildings of the 1100 block of Water Avenue illustrate Selma's prominence as a cotton market and distribution center. Designed in the Italianate style with deep bracketed cornices, 1118-1124 Water Avenue (21) exhibits French doors with full arched transoms surmounted with stone hood molds. Hallmarks of the Italianate style are the elaborate bracketed cornice and pilasters that flow from the first story to denticulated molding as depicted on 1112 Water Avenue (20). The Italianate style as interpreted on 1110 Water Avenue

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Culture Expression*, (New York: Icon Edition, 1993) 179.

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presents a unifying element of an arcaded pediment treatment within the parapet. Multiple pairs of French doors provide access to the cast iron gallery.

Selma Times-Journal Building, 1014 Water Avenue (17) embodies the essence of the Italianate movement. Fenestration of the five-bay buildings is comprised of French doors surmounted by fanlights and embellished with Gibbs surrounds. Second story windows with elaborate bracketed hood molds characterize the Eastlake style. A resplendent projecting bracketed cornice with triangular pediment embellishes the façade. Italianate buildings fill the block with details such as the projecting bracketed cornice modulating to a triangular pediment on the Woolsey Building (16). At 1010 Water (15) cast iron gates with segmental arched detailing augment the fifteen-pane door primary entrance with transom and sidelights.

The Renaissance Revival style resonates in the three-story Harmony Club Building, circa 1909. Characteristic of the style is the arcaded loggia and paired arched windows with arched stone archivolt. Historically, the building displayed a two-story porch enhanced with delicate cast iron balustrade and spandrels. The high architectural style evidences the mercantile success of the builders of the edifice—the Jewish population in Selma. The Harmony Club, one of the most established social clubs in Selma, previously held their social functions in the second floor of the Selma National Bank at 30 Broad Street (Old Town Historic District). A second building, at 1008 Water Avenue (14), circa 1890, exemplifies the Renaissance Revival style in the dichromatic masonry and stone detailing above the entrances and windows. At 1008 Water is a Renaissance Revival building with denticulated cornice below a stepped parapet surmounted by stone coping. Windows are enhanced with rock-faced stone lintels.

Selma's prominence as a distribution center is due in large part to the railway system established prior to the Civil War and expanded during and after Reconstruction with numerous lines connecting in Selma. Within the expanded district is the only remaining train depot in Selma, once a part of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, a Romanesque Revival brick edifice with stone detailing exhibited in a wide stone belt course enriched with cyma reversa molding. Details such as a denticulated cornice embellished with brackets and shaped parapet are hallmarks of the style. A two-and-one-half story tower with bell shaped roof gives prominence to the building.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture on Water Avenue tends to the one and two story austere warehouse buildings of that era such as 1510 Water, 1512 Water and W. L. Ward & Son warehouse 1410 (42). A simple denticulated cornice details the pediment. At 1514-1516 Water is a one-story circa 1948 building with a five-bay façade featuring display windows with transoms enframed in wood on a brick bulkhead. The simple style lends itself to its present occupant, a hardware store.

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## Historical Summary

Acknowledgment of exploration by the Spanish, in particular, DeSoto is generally accepted to have occurred during the 1540s. French explorations of the City of Selma indicate the designation of Selma as Ecor de Bienville on a map of 1732. This and the presence of the Alibamo Indians is commemorated by a stone on the river bank (8) on Water Avenue near the intersection of Lauderdale and Water Avenue. The area was known as High Soapstone Bluff in the early 1800s until Thomas Moore established a trading post in 1817 and named the settlement Moore's Bluff.<sup>3</sup>

Selma Town Land Company, lead by William R. King was organized in 1818 for the purpose of buying and selling land in Alabama. King is credited with the naming of Selma after a mythical city described in what was first thought to have been a translation of Ossian's work. The work was later found to be a hoax but nonetheless the Town of Selma originated with the creation of the Selma Town Land Company.<sup>4</sup>

Phillip John Weaver purchased Moore's house in 1820 and in 1824 built a warehouse near the river. An astute businessman Weaver prospered and in 1825 he constructed a double-room store on Lauderdale and Water Avenue. A frame home for his wife and four children was constructed near the store. Weaver's business grew and in 1830 he opened a second store in Pontotoc, Mississippi, selling to the Chickasaws. Relying primarily on river trade this early settler in Selma envisioned the potential of the railroad system.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas J. Frow, persuaded by Phillip John Weaver, relocated from Mifflintown, Pennsylvania, to initiate the first newspaper in Selma, the *Selma Courier*. Frow issued the first issue on November 2, 1827. Assuredly, the presence of a newspaper in the town indicated progress in the establishment of Selma. Frow charged \$5.00 for a yearly subscription to the paper and \$1.50 for advertising ten lines. Young local attorneys contributed editorials to the *Selma Courier*.<sup>6</sup>

Due to its proximity to the Alabama River steamboat travel became the primary mode of travel for Selma and Dallas County augmented by the stagecoach with the coach stop on the south side of the river. The ferry operated by Pat Callahan and owned by Colonel Dawson provided transportation to the north side of the

<sup>3</sup> Walter M. Jackson, *The Story of Selma*, (Birmingham: Birmingham Printing Company, 1954) 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>Jackson, 142.

<sup>5</sup>Jackson, *Selma*, 238-239.

<sup>6</sup>Hardy, *Selma: Her Institutions*, 143.

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river. According to John Hardy the first steamboat on the Alabama River was the "Tensas" and arrived in Selma in 1822. River traffic is documented in the *Selma Courier* on December 7, 1827.<sup>7</sup> In the 1830s sidewheelers, an early version of steamboats with deck space for cotton, made daily shipments to Mobile of cotton and produce.<sup>8</sup> Grayson notes that some of the steamboats were "palatial" and that the Grand Republic, a double-decker boat had a calliope.<sup>9</sup>

The St. James Hotel, completed in 1838 by H. J. Brantley, (22) and located near the city wharf provided lodging for guests brought by steamboat and overnight lodging for Dallas County landowners for oversight of the distribution of the cotton crop. Purchased for \$800 the hotel site Lot 29 was part of the Selma Town Land Company's holdings. An article in *The Selma Free Press* of February 17, 1838 notes steady progress of the building. A subsequent article announced the opening of the hotel with the rates published at \$25 with lodging and \$20 without lodging.<sup>10</sup> Proximity to the dock and the stagecoach intersection at Washington and Water contributed to the early success of the hotel.

Technology in the Southern states forged ahead in the decades leading to the Civil War. In 1840 total capital invested in manufacturing accounted for \$20,270. In 1850 the value of annual product in manufacturing was \$194,420. In 1860 sixty-nine-manufacturing establishments produced \$492,444 of goods. By examining the manufacturing census records from 1860 and the population census Dallas County appears to be a flourishing area with manufacturing companies producing nearly half million dollars in goods. It is apparent in studying the economic viability of Dallas County that not only was it rich in agricultural resources, the highest production of cotton in the state at 63,410 bales in 1860, but also developed a sizable industrial base.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>John Hardy, *Selma: Her Institutions and Her Men*, (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company) 142.

<sup>8</sup>Sue Hite, "Settlers of 1814 rushed in with Alabama Fever," *Portrait of Selma: First 175 Years: Selma Times-Journal*.

<sup>9</sup>Grayson, *Yesterday and Today*, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup>Jean Martin, *Portrait of Selma: First 175 Years, The Selma Times Journal*,

<sup>11</sup>Fitts, *Selma: Queen City*, 10.

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Due to its strong manufacturing base and high cotton production civic leaders of Selma realized the importance of the railroad to the continued commercial development of the community in terms of transportation of cotton and import and export of goods. According to Carole Rifkind in *Main Street: The Face of Urban America*, "a specialized wholesale main street developed along the riverfront and the railroad tracks."<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the commercial nature of the Water Avenue Historic District as a wholesale distribution center depended on the railroad system.

The first railroad in Selma was the Alabama and Tennessee Rivers Railroad. The predecessor of that railroad, Selma and Tennessee Railroad Company did not materialize but outlined the route of the Alabama and Tennessee Rivers Railroad. The proposed route of the Selma and Tennessee Railroad Company would take the track from Selma to the Tennessee River on a line between Alabama and the state of Georgia.<sup>13</sup> Selmians such as William Johnson and P. J. Weaver supported the railroad as major subscribers for the \$500,000 named in the charter. The City of Mobile was very interested in the proposition, as the plan was to bring freight to Selma via the railroad and then ship the freight to Mobile.<sup>14</sup> This occurred in 1839, a time when the financial condition of the country was dire. Even though \$900,000 in stock had been sold the initial installments had not been made. According to the minutes of the last meeting of the stockholders in March of 1840, "the pressure of the times and financial condition of the Company, make it advisable temporarily to suspend the prosecution of the work."<sup>15</sup> In 1848 the railroad boosters moved forward with the incorporation of the Alabama and Tennessee River Railroad building on the proposed route of the defunct Selma and Tennessee Railroad Company. The first spike on this railroad was placed in 1851 and bonds were issued in September of 1852. The first section of track was to Montevallo, completed in July of 1853. Within ten years from 1848-1858 a hundred miles of track was laid.<sup>16</sup>

A railroad line from Selma to the Gulf appeared to be a viable transportation route. The Selma and Gulf Railroad Company was incorporated in January of 1858. The transport of coal, iron ore and limestone from

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<sup>12</sup>Carole Rifkind, *Main Street, The Face of Urban America*, 53.

<sup>13</sup>Jackson, *The Story of Selma*, 106-111.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 107, 110.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 115.

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Shelby County was the impetus for this connection. Although necessary steps were taken in the next two years such as issuing stock and setting the interest rate with the advent of the Civil War construction on Selma and Gulf Railroad temporarily halted. Jackson notes that the proposed line remained inactive until 1868. Prior to this the Alabama legislature provided for the building of railroads at \$12,000 per mile. A reorganization meeting took place in Selma on November 10, 1868 with Dr. D.C. Smyly elected as president. The financial issue of the outstanding debt \$60,000 by the city seemed to be a detriment to the progress of the railroad although progress had been made in terms of new lines and acquisition of railroad cars. Financial problems and misappropriation of funds plagued the railroad and in 1874 the railroad went into receivership. Foreclosure of the railroad occurred on September 22, 1879 subsequently procured by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. During the legislatures of 1892-1893 the General Assembly of Alabama passed an act authorizing the railroad to connect Pine Apple and Repton. Upon completion of the track the road became a part of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company.

A third railroad, the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad, incorporated on February 7, 1850. Due to the importance of the railroad to the transportation of troops, munitions of war, provisions and the public mails Confederate President Davis requested funds from the Confederate Congress for materials to complete the line from Demopolis to Meridian. The Union Army confiscated the allotted funds in February of 1862. Iron designated for the bankrupt Cahawba, Marion and Greensboro Railroad was made available. The line opened on December 18, 1862.<sup>17</sup>

The General Assembly in 1862 acted to change the charters of rail lines into Selma and permit cooperation between two or more lines to procure materials and land and create a shared depot. The Alabama and Mississippi Railroad was reorganized in 1864 under General W. J. Hardee and became the Selma and Meridian Railroad Company. Financial problems plagued this line as it had other lines in the South and the railroad went into receivership in 1870.<sup>18</sup> After several reorganizations the line was absorbed into the Southern Railway System.

The Selma, Marion and Memphis Railroad began as a charter for a line between Cahaba and Marion. The line did materialize initiating the original mission with the idea of extending the line to the east and west. The Confederate Government impounded the iron to continue the rail from Selma to Meridian. In 1868 The General Assembly acted to reorganize the railroad with its charge to connect with Columbus, Mississippi.

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<sup>17</sup>Fitts, Alston, *Selma: Queen City of Black Belt* 49-50.

<sup>18</sup>Jackson, *Selma*, 133-138.

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Selma benefited greatly from this, as it became the location of a warehouse and machine shops as well as depots.<sup>19</sup> The road was sold in July of 1878 to bond holders and reorganized under the name of Selma and Greensboro Railroad Co. Ultimately, the railroad became part of the Southern Railway system.

The early railroads to Selma cannot be understated. With the establishment of Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad with shipments running from Selma to Bibb and Shelby Counties made it possible for Selma to become a distribution center for coal and iron ore. This proved fortuitous for the location of a Confederate Foundry in Selma under the direction of Jones and established Selma as a major supplier of weaponry such as the Brook Gun.

Spearheaded by Colin J. McRae, an Alabama representative to the Provisional Congress, the Confederate Naval Foundry (3) was formed in Selma from the Alabama Manufacturing Company founded in the 1850s. McRae was successful in purchasing the foundry and obtaining contracts. He was, however, plagued with labor shortages for qualified mechanics to complete the foundry. Due to the dearth of a capable crew the foundry was not able to start production of cannons. McRae was asked to accept a commission to Europe for procurement of funds for the Confederacy. He accepted the position with the provision that a suitable successor be obtained for the Foundry. Subsequently, the War Department and Navy Department purchased the Foundry and appointed Colonel George W. Rains to take over the operations. Rains assignment proved to be a poor choice for he disapproved of the location. However, he did recommend that the Navy undertake the operations of the Foundry.<sup>20</sup>

Commander Catesby ap R. Jones received an appointment to take command of the Foundry. Upon his arrival to Selma Jones realized the foundry had not begun production and that the factory suffered from water seepage in the gun pit and that the essential loading equipment such as crane was ill equipped for lifting heavy armament. Jones set out to find the most experienced metallurgist available and persuaded George Peacock of England and formerly of the iron works of Columbiana, Alabama, to come on board. Still in the experimental stage The first Brooke rifle, still in the experimental stage, was produced in July of 1863. In January of 1864 the foundry produced the first gun for use in combat. During the course of the war approximately one

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 138-144.

<sup>20</sup>William N. Still, "Selma and the Confederate States Navy," *From Civil War to Civil Rights: Alabama 1860-1860*, ed. Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1987) 22-23.

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hundred naval guns were assembled in the foundry.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the Brooke rifles ironclad ships were produced at the Confederate Naval Foundry.

Shortage of qualified mechanics was a constant problem due to conscription. And the problem was acerbated by the competition that existed between the Army Department's Arsenal and the Navy Department's Foundry. In 1865 it is documented that four hundred workers were employed, three hundred of which were African-Americans. Procured from planters on a contract basis they were assigned to cut wood for fuel or similar unskilled duties.

Selma's importance in providing munitions, Brooke rifles and ironclad ships for the Confederacy proved to be its undoing. Brevet Major General James Harrison Wilson had prepared his troops for the charge through Alabama during the winter and in late March began the series of battles that would destroy the infrastructure of bridges and manufacturing of the Confederate army. Two of Wilson's commanders Long and Upton successfully routed General Nathan Bedford Forest's troops of 2,000 men approximately 20 miles north of Selma at Ebenezer Church. On April 2, 1865, Wilson's troops arrived in Selma. Although Selmians responded to the call to action the city was unable to withstand the onslaught of Wilson's troops.

The destruction of the armaments was a devastating blow to the South, but the destruction of the railroad broke the connection to other cities and temporarily halted the transport of goods and services to Selma.<sup>22</sup> Selma suffered in many aspects but a visitor from Jacksonville made his observations in the Jacksonville *Republican* after a visit to Selma.

Selma—We spent two days last week in this beautiful, pleasant and agreeable city, it being our first visit since the destructive Yankee raids passed through. Although we had heard and read many descriptions of the burning of Selma, we had formed no adequate idea of the extent of devastation and destruction. Selma suffered, we have no doubt, more than all the other towns and cities of the state put together, or than any other city of the South, except Charleston, Richmond, Columbia and Atlanta. It is cheerful; however, to see the patience and fortitude with which the people bear their losses and the alacrity with which they go to work to repair them.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>23</sup>Jackson, *Selma*, 250.

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After the war the Southern states had little capital to fund improvements to the railroad equipment and, consequently, were supported by Northern capitalists who took over the operations of the railroad. The Alabama and Tennessee Railroad consolidated with two other lines, Georgia and Alabama Railroad and Dalton and Jacksonville Railroad, and became a part of the Selma, Rome and Dalton Railroad. Railroad bonds issued in 1852 became due in 1872 and the funds were not available to meet this indebtedness. Consequently, due to \$91,000 owed by Selma for indebtedness from Alabama and Tennessee Railroad the Selma, Dalton and Rome Railroad Company in the process of a bankruptcy sale became part of the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia Railroad Company in 1881.<sup>24</sup> Southern Railroad assumed administration of then what was originally the old Alabama and Tennessee Rivers Railroad.<sup>25</sup>

Early railroad promoters understood that a town was transformed by the presence of the railroad. Although, mergers and acquisitions changed ownership of the railway lines, Selma retained its railway system. Water Avenue Historic District transformed from a steamboat-shipping center to a railway-shipping center and continued to develop as a specialized wholesale main street in response to the need for wholesale merchants and warehousing of goods. "Fortunes rose or fell according to the direction taken by the tracks." Furthermore, states Carole Rifkind "the success of a town was assured if an only if a railroad went through it."<sup>26</sup> The types of businesses that developed along Water Avenue included not only cotton merchants and wholesale grocers but real estate agents as well. Selma's success as a distribution center funneled into the clamor for real estate as agents and speculators stood ready to capitalize on the boom.

During the Reconstruction period many industries, including cotton and real estate, benefited from the presence of the railroad or transformed their product to meet the needs of the transportation industry. Emerging from the Confederate Foundry was the Englishman recruited by Commander Catsby ap Roger Jones as an expert metallurgist. George Peacock whose system of core making for shells enabled the foundry to triple production. After the War he established a foundry in Selma on Water Avenue and in 1887 developed the Peacock self-oiling railroad car wheel manufactured in Selma and distributed throughout the country.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Jackson, *Selma*, 117-120.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 121.

<sup>26</sup>Rifkind, 60.

<sup>27</sup>Jackson, *Selma*, 232.

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Peacock's ornamental ironwork can be seen in Selma's Old Town Historic District commercial area as the fire escape of 14 Broad Street in the Old Town Historic District.

Improvements in the transportation system and electrical system not only improved the quality of life for the Water Avenue Historic District but also brought transportation to the outlying areas. In 1872 the beginnings of the Selma Street Rail Road Company drawn by horse power provided transportation of Selmians from the commercial area on Water and Broad Streets and Selma, Rome, and Dalton Railroad to Lauderdale Street, Alabama Street, North Street (Jeff Davis) and Union Street.<sup>28</sup> Extension of Selma Street Rail Road Company along Alabama Street from Broad to Union at the Dallas County Court House encouraged development east of Alabama Street. In December of 1888 the Selma Street railroad expanded to Third Street from Church to Lapsley, Lawrence from Water to Alabama, Sylvan from Alabama to city limits.<sup>29</sup> Development of the streetcar created opportunities for patrons in the outlying areas to frequent retail stores and thus boost revenue for the wholesale establishments in Water Avenue Historic District.

The Selma Bridge Corporation, formed in 1884, assumed responsibility for the construction of the bridge making it accessible to the public through tolls. River traffic in that era was heavy and consequently a bridge that could be operated by a turnstile moved the bridge when a large vessel was approaching. The building of the bridge in Selma connected the people of the city with those in rural areas. A celebration commemorated the opening of Bridge in April of 1885. On January 17, 1899, Dallas County purchased the bridge from the Selma Bridge Corporation for \$65,000. At that time the County removed the toll. In 1886 floods threatened to destroy the structure. The citizens of Selma worked around the clock reinforcing the structure with sandbags and saving the bridge. Associated with the bridge is the Bridgetender's House (2), a one-and-one-half story Queen Anne style residence in close proximity to the site of the turnstile bridge. Since the bridge turnstile operated manually it was necessary for personnel to be present at all times in order to facilitate passage of large vessels.

In conjunction with the railroad were the various support buildings such as the depots. Civic leaders understood that railroad depots were central to the workings of life in a small town. "Success in turn-of-the-century small-town America" according to John R. Stillgoe, "involved a clear understanding of the metropolitan energy that flowed along the high iron and spilled out the depot door."<sup>30</sup> Although, new depots

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<sup>28</sup>Jackson, *Selma*, 284-285.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>30</sup>Stillgoe, 209.

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were erected in the place of those destroyed during the Civil War, it was not until the late nineteenth century that the present depot was constructed at the end of Water Avenue. The Louisville and Nashville Depot/Old Depot Museum (6) built circa 1890 stands at Bow Street now the intersection of Water Avenue and Martin Luther King Street. Selma's expansive Romanesque Revival depot not only resonates of the architectural spirit of the time but rose to the challenge with passenger-handling operations that included waiting rooms, restrooms and ticket windows all fairly bristling with a charged electricity of the fast-paced environment.

Manufacturing at the turn of the century accounted for over \$400,000 income to Dallas County with 111 manufacturing firms. Dallas County was home to the American Candy Manufacturing Co., Dallas Lumber and Manufacturing, Esler & McDowell Carriage Factory, A. E. Reamer Planing Mill and Schun-Miller Lumber Co. The availability of iron ore and coal by rail furnished the Selma factories with the necessary fuel to power machinery.

Pavement of Selma's streets had occurred by the early 1900s and mule cars of the Selma Street Rail Road Company were replaced by electric cars April 1, 1901. Patrons rode free the first day. This form of mass transportation continued until middle 1920 when the automobiles became a more prevalent means of transportation. One-story buildings with garage bays with roll-up doors for auto mechanics reflected the changing technology as the population moved from being dependent on the street car to dependence on automobiles with a 150 percent increase in automobile ownership from 1920 to 1930 nationwide.<sup>31</sup>

The Depression affected Selma much as it did the rest of the country. Two primary employers in Selma, Alabama Textile Mills and Sunset Mills closed. Residential construction came to an abrupt halt. Selmians looked for diversion from the economic scene and frequented the picture shows for entertainment. In contrast to the lifestyle of conspicuous consumption of the late 1920s, the 1930s era lifestyle was a day to day existence based on obtaining necessities. The rise in unemployment, foreclosure of mortgages and loss of confidence in the banks affected the daily lives of Selmians. The Southern Railway system offered the most stable payroll after the depression. However, railroad workers trained to service steam engines worried that the new technology of the diesel engine would change the railroad industry. Already on the horizon the automobile altered the demand for passenger service.

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<sup>31</sup>Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 187-189.

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In 1938 construction on a new bridge across the Alabama River marked the end of an era of the turnstile bridge in Selma and connected the city's southern boundary. In order to accomplish this monumental task it was necessary to demolish late nineteenth century buildings on Water Avenue perpendicular to Broad Street. Congressman Sam Hobbs was instrumental in obtaining funding for the bridge. Although, the project suffered from setbacks such as flooding, the project was completed in two years and ushered in new potential for economic progress for the city. Ceremonies for the Edmund Winston Pettus Bridge were held Friday, May 24, 1940. According to Jackson the celebration became one of the grandest Selma had ever witnessed.<sup>32</sup>

Prosperity came to Selma in the form of Craig Field. With the expansion of the Army Air Corps the necessity of additional facilities for pilot training became evident. Prior to World War II Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas, was responsible for training of pilots. Located approximately five miles east of Selma on Highway 80 newly accessible by the Edmund Pettus Bridge the new base was a 1,700-acre property that was to become Craig Field. Groundbreaking for the site took place in August of 1940.<sup>33</sup> Built prior to the United States involvement in the war a commencement was held in May 1941 for 39 cadets. Not only were American fighter pilots trained at Craig Field but British and Dutch as well. The training field commissioned 4,471 pilots by 1943. Of those trained 1,392 were British and ten Dutch.<sup>34</sup>

Craig field had a dramatic effect on Selma. Facilities were built adjacent to the base as housing for the officer's families. Local merchants experienced a marked increase in business and, most important, were the opportunities for employment. Local Selmians filled many of the positions occupied by military as they were called into combat. Ultimately, the base increased to encompass 2,000 military and 1,400 civilian employees.<sup>35</sup> When the field closed in 1977 Selma experienced the loss of \$35 Million in payroll.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Jackson, *Selma*, 506-507.

<sup>33</sup>Jackson, *Selma*, 511.

<sup>34</sup> Lou Thole, *Forgotten Fields of America: World War II Bases and Training Then and Now, Volume II*, ("Advanced Training. Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., Inc.) 127-140.

<sup>35</sup>Morgan, "Craig Air Force Base," 95

<sup>36</sup>Martin, interview, 7 September 2001.

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Water Avenue Historic District structures lost buildings in two separate fires. In a deadly blaze on New Years Eve of 1955 the north side of the 1300 block of Water Avenue between Franklin and Green Streets was gutted. Businesses affected by the loss included Lackeos Brothers Wholesale grocers, Lawrence Brothers Bush-Hog offices and offices of Hohenburg Brothers Company. At the corner of Broad and Water adjacent to the Edmund Pettus Bridge the Crossings Restaurant located in the Baker Building was destroyed by fire June 5, 1984. Auspiciously, the firemen contained the blaze within the building therefore saving the remaining structures in the 1100 block of Water Avenue.

## Commerce

The commercial endeavors of Water Avenue essentially began with Thomas Moore and then with Phillip John Weaver purchasing Moore's house in 1820 and subsequent building of a warehouse near the river the commerce of Selma began. With his burgeoning business Weaver built a double room store on Lauderdale and Water Avenue. Weaver's business grew and in 1830 he opened a second store in Pontotoc, Mississippi.

With the settling of the area after the Selma Town Land Company the town enjoyed a steady growth and benefited economically from the river location. The construction of St. James Hotel in 1837-1838 was a natural outgrowth due to the burgeoning shipping business on Water Avenue.

Water Avenue Historic District in 1852 was a flourishing commercial area with numerous businesses such as McCraw & Prestridge, warehousemen; Lyle & Terrel, saddlers, George Sayre & Co., exchange brokers as well as the St. James Hotel, circa 1837. The St. James Hotel (22), now a fine historic hotel, catered to cotton brokers and riverboat travelers. The first floor of the hotel functioned for businesses while the second and third floors offered spacious rooms each with a fireplace. In 1907 the hotel operated as the Riverside Hotel with H Meyer & Co. Liquor Dealers occupying the corner of Washington & Water. Exchange Barber Shop within the St. James building next to the Liquor Dealers, and cotton brokers such as O'Hayyofan & Co. occupied space next to and behind the barber shop. In the late 1850s the three-story Greek Revival Eddistone Hotel was constructed at 601-607 Water. Just as the St. James provided space for businessmen so too did Eddistone Hotel (38). Various businesses occupied the first story such as the Exchange Bar in 1907 and W. M. Hinson Furniture.

The advent of the railroad system brought many opportunities for growth to Selma. Many artisans and trades people moved to Selma to provide munitions and supplies for the Confederacy. Wilson's Raiders decimated much of the commercial area as well as the railroad depots and railroad tracks. Undaunted, Selmians campaigned to have the county seat moved to Selma from Cahaba. Bolstered by the county seat designation the merchants, cotton brokers and entrepreneurs of Selma rebuilt Water Avenue. Buildings in the 1200 block

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of Water across from St. James Hotel date from the 1860-1870 era and are considered to be fine examples of the Italianate style.

According to the Ross A. Smith's Selma Commercial Directory of 1880-1881 Commission Merchants Clark & Co. and Western Union Telegraph Company occupied the Phoenix Building (27). M. Canning & Co., carriage repository, occupied 1000-1002 Water (10). Wholesale businesses such as grocers and cotton brokers and buyers were located on Water. Grocer Gary & Raymond were at 1118-1124 Water (21) and cotton brokers and buyers such as A. G. Stollenwerck & Co. and Welch & Keith were located on Water Avenue. There are numerous African-American businesses listed in the directory; however, some of these businesses were on the fringes of Water Avenue, for example, on Washington between Alabama Avenue and Water Avenue or Alabama between Washington and Franklin. The types of business that African-Americans owned or managed were primarily service businesses and not wholesale businesses.

In his memoirs of Selma Grayson notes that the St. James Hotel enjoyed a large following in the 1870s and 1880s frequented by landowners, politicians and sportsmen. On the first floor were hotel offices, bar, billiard room and businesses. A capacious parlor and ballroom with a view of the river occupied the upper floors. The planter aristocracy and mercantile class frequented the ballroom on many festive occasions. Colonel Jim Dedman and Captain Dedman managed the hotel during this period.<sup>37</sup>

In 1888 *The Great South* proclaimed that Selma had a "favored location" due to excellent railway facilities and the close proximity to the Alabama River. Consequently, Selma developed into a wholesale distribution center. Adler Grocery is listed as one of Selma's largest wholesale groceries located at 1010 (then 813 Water) Water Avenue (13). Adler's is described as serving an area of one hundred square miles and had the potential to become a great commercial center.

The Commercial Directory of 1906 indicates that the wholesale center continued to flourish. Nine wholesale grocers are listed. The following businesses were located in buildings still extant: V. B. Atkins Grocery & Commission Co. 1100 Water Avenue (19); Nathan Kahn & Son, 1014 Water Avenue; Gary, Kennedy & Co. 1112 Water Avenue (20); L. & E Lamar 1217-1221 Water Avenue (27); M. S. Smith 1118-1124 Water Avenue (21); and W. L. Ward & Son, cotton commission merchants, 1410 Water Avenue (42). Those businesses, such as W. L. Ward & Son, that were offshoots of the cotton industry and functioned as buyers, brokers, factors and commission merchants occupied many of the buildings on Water Avenue. Circa 1907 W. L. Ward & Son built a new warehouse for his cotton commission business. Adler's does not appear in the

<sup>37</sup>Grayson, *Yesterday and Today*, 40.

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listing of wholesale grocery merchants in the 1906 directory, but L. C. Adler & Co. appears in the furniture section.

West of Broad Street at 1014 Water (17) in the grand Italianate were the operations of Nathan Kahn & Son who operated a wholesale grocer and cotton commission firm. The Selma Morning Times printing operations were located in 1010 Water (15) with the Post Office on the first story. Jud & J. Shearen Breslin Furniture and Undertakers operated a funeral parlor and furniture store at 1203 Water Avenue (24). Dashing white Arabian horses drawing the hearses enhanced Breslin's renown as a mortuary firm. D. P. O'Flinn operated a saloon at 1201 Water (23). O'Flinn's location placed him in close proximity to a wholesale liquor establishment at 1110 Water owned by M. J. Elkan & Co. (19). Some manufacturing, such as Armour Packing at 611 Water, occurred on Water Avenue. Harris & Milhouse, African-American proprietors, operated a barbershop within the St. James Hotel block.

Selma continued to prosper in the distribution sector. In 1911 L. C. Adler & Company, wholesalers in furniture did business on Water Avenue at 1223-1225 Water (29). Owners Lee C. Adler and Arthur Loeb started their business in 1900. In order to stimulate the wholesale business two drummers traveled the region. L. C. Adler & Company advertised their firm as sole distributors of Baldwin refrigerators and ice chests with warehouses on the Louisville and Nashville Railway Tracks. The Harmony Club Building 1007 Water (13) housed the office of Ellis Investment & Insurance Co. J. B. Ellis managed the firm and its said that his knowledge dated to the time of Reconstruction. Drawing from his experiences as a planter, merchant and manufacturer Ellis was also a respected civic leader and active in church affairs. In 1911 Breslin continued his funeral and furniture business of forty years on Water Avenue. In addition to offering the white Arabian horse-drawn hearses the firm obtained a contract for furnishings for the Hotel Albert, no longer extant. H. S. Sullivan, African-American practiced dentistry at 1300 ½ Water 30.

Along Water Avenue in 1911 from the Broad to Washington proceeding west were B. J. Schuster, hardware, at 1100 Water (19), Benish & Meyer Offices at 1102 Water, Alabama Hardware 1104 Water. These structures were demolished for the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Continuing along Water were the following businesses: Center City Building & Loan Association, 1110 Water (19); Southern Clothing & Notions at 1112 Water (20), Charles Goldstein, cotton broker at 1114 Water, Liberman Makoff Dry Goods Co. at 1122 Water; Selma Hardware at 1120 Water; and Smith Grocery Co. at 1124 Water.

Circa 1919 Johnson Brothers Buildings at 1601 Water Avenue was erected. The two-story brick building with one-story wings has a signboard on the south elevation incised "Johnson Bros. Wholesale & Retail Grocers."

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According to the Sanborn Map of 1925 and Polk's Selma City Directory the building at the corner of Water and Broad contained four offices with three facing Water Avenue. Insurance agencies occupied 1015 and 1017, and Reid Lumber Co. occupied 1019 Water. Businesses related to the automobile changed the business clientele of Water Avenue. Automobile livery businesses Rent A Ford Co. and Yellow Cab Co. occupied 1004 Water and 1006 Water with an automobile insurance across the street in the Harmony Club Building. Blue Ribbon Auto Top Co. operated a firm for upholstering the ragtops of automobiles at 1012 Water. Several automobile dealerships appeared in the directory on Water Avenue in the 1300 block; however, this block was destroyed in a fire in 1956. Businesses such as Wynn Motor Terminal offered tire and battery service operated as a sidewalk gas station and was allowed by the city until the late 1940s. However, blacksmiths continued to be a necessary component of the times with Smith & Lockett ferriers at 1418 Water.

Fewer businesses related to the cotton industry occupied upper stories of Water Avenue. Two cotton warehouses appeared in the directory one at 2109 Selma and Erhart-Dixie Warehouse, 1501 Water, no longer extant. M Hohenburg & Co., a cotton merchant long associated with the industry, occupied 1122 ½ Water. At the corner of Washington and Water the former St. James Hotel was occupied by G. M. Callen Wholesale Produce. W. M. Hinson, furniture wholesaler formerly on Water, relocated to 1113 Alabama in the Old Town Historic District. The Selma Times merged with the Journal and relocated to 1014-1018 Water.

In the 1500 block of Water Avenue two buildings were built circa 1930s one of which is a two-story commercial building at 1510 Water (49) with a central garage bay. The other commercial building at 1512 Water (50) is a one-story building with a central garage bay that retains the original doors. At the corner 1514-1516 Water Avenue (51) is a one-story five-bay brick building with a stepped parapet that functions as a hardware store, circa 1948. One-story buildings were erected on the north side of 1300 block of Water Avenue after the 1954 fire and will become contributing c. 2005.

Water Avenue Historic District is significant for its historical context as a center of commerce. The tangible artifacts of Selma and Water Avenue Historic District reveal an architectural time line that begins at the Greek Revival period with commercial buildings from succeeding periods up to commercial buildings of the 1940s. Selma's Water Avenue Historic District is one of the few remaining districts that retain commercial architecture of the ante-bellum period as well as buildings from the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras. The architecture has a high degree of integrity and depicts the architectural elements associated with the Deep South such as the cast iron balustrades and metal canopies. The town that began as a settlement on what is now Water Avenue with Thomas Moore evolved to a bustling commercial center in the ante-bellum era. Channeling the energy of the railroad industry Selmians developed Water Avenue Historic District as a thriving distribution center in the

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late nineteenth-century displaying the rich architectural character of the specialized wholesale main street. Early to mid-twentieth century buildings illustrates the restrained quality of commercial wholesale buildings of that era. The character of the Water Avenue Historic District resonates of the Deep South commercial architectural traditions from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century beginning with the resplendent exuberance of the Italianate era to the minimalism of early twentieth century commercial aesthetics.

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## 10. Boundary Description

See attached map scale 1"= 100' for boundaries. The south boundary is the Alabama River and reflects the original boundary. The east boundary follows along Water Avenue incorporating resources overlooked in a previous survey or newly eligible in the period of significance. The former Louisville and Nashville Railroad Depot and Confederate Foundry are included in the district with the east boundary along Beech Creek. The north boundary is the north boundary of Water Avenue except as noted for the block between Broad and Washington. The west boundary is bounded by Old Town Historic District and reflects the original boundary.

## Boundary Justification

The nominated property contains properties that are historically associated with Water Avenue Historic District. The boundary of the nominated property follows historic boundaries as determined by the re-survey of the district and inclusion of the five contiguous blocks on Water Avenue, the former Louisville and Nashville Railroad and Confederate Foundry.

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Water Avenue Historic District  
Dallas County, Alabama

By: Susan A. Besser  
Franklin Preservation Group  
252 Fourth Avenue South  
Franklin, Tennessee 37064

Date: October 21, 2002

Negatives: Alabama Historical Commission  
468 S. Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama

1303 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1407 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1411 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1417 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1505 Water Avenue, facing northeast  
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Confederate Foundry, facing east  
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Confederate Foundry, north building, facing east  
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Confederate Foundry, facing east  
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Confederate Foundry, facing east  
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Confederate Foundry, southeast corner, facing north  
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Confederate Foundry, interior trussing  
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Southern Railway Freight Depot, facing southwest  
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Southern Railway Freight Depot, shows railroad tracks, facing northeast  
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Old Depot Museum/Louisville & Nashville Depot, facing east  
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Freight Building, facing southeast  
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1514-1516 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1512 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1510 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1500 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1416 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1414 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1410 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1400 Water Avenue, facing south  
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Eddystone Hotel, 1310-1318 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1308 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1306 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1304 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1302 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1300 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1224 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1222 Water Avenue, facing south  
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St. James Hotel, 1200 Water Avenue, facing southeast  
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Bridgetender's House, 2 Lafayette Park, facing east  
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1118-1124 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1112 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1110 Water Avenue, facing south  
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Selma Times Journal, 1014 Water Avenue, facing south  
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Woolsey Building, 1012 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1010 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1008 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1006 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1004 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1000-1002 Water Avenue, facing south  
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1001 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1005 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1015 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1-3 Broad Street, east elevation of 1015 Water Avenue, facing west  
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1201 Water Avenue, facing northeast  
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1203 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1205 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1207-1211 Water Avenue, facing north  
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Phoenix Building, 1217-1221 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1223-1225 Water Avenue, facing north  
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1301 Water Avenue, facing northeast  
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2 Lawrence Street, facing northwest  
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1400 Water Avenue, rear, facing northwest  
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Johnson Brothers Building, 1601 Water Avenue, facing east  
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Johnson Brothers Building, detail  
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2 Washington Avenue, facing northeast  
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Bienville Rock, Water Avenue  
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Water Avenue @ Martin Luther King Boulevard, facing west  
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Water Avenue @ Green Street, facing east  
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Water Avenue @ Franklin Street, facing west  
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Water Avenue @ Washington, facing northeast  
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Water Avenue facing Louisville & Nashville Depot, facing east  
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Water Avenue @ Broad, facing east  
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Water Avenue @ Lauderdale, facing east  
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