

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JAN 20 1988

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUN 3 1988
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Historic Resources of Fairhope, Alabama

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Incorporated Limits

N/A not for publication

city, town Fairhope

NA vicinity of

congressional district 1

state Alabama

code 01

county Baldwin

code 003

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership

street & number

city, town

vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Judge's Office

street & number Baldwin County Courthouse

city, town Bay Minette

state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Alabama Inventory
title Baldwin County Historic Site Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
1970-present
date 1985 federal state county local

depository for survey records Mobile Historic Development Commission/Alabama Historic Commission

city, town Mobile/Montgomery

state Alabama

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION

The Multiple Resource Area of Fairhope is defined by the present city limits, largely designated in 1958. The Bayfront District, White Avenue District and the individual nominations lie within the 1911 plat showing the subdivision of Single-Tax lands. Before the first Single-Taxers arrived in 1894, the site of Fairhope was an overgrown field known as Stapleton's Pasture. The earliest settlers discovered rotting wooden stakes on the site, vestiges of a failed development scheme before the Civil War. The spectacular bluffs overlooking Mobile Bay proved a hindrance to early town development. As there were no railroads or wagon roads to the site, all equipment and supplies had to be brought by water from Mobile and dragged up the steep bluffs. The townsite itself was deeply gouged by two large ravines, or gullies: Bayou Chargon Gully defined the northern limit of the first 135 acre purchase and Stack's Gully the southern limit. Fairhoppers viewed these gullies as features of great beauty and grandeur and not as a deterrent to development. By 1910 the Single-Taxers had purchased over 4,000 acres, not all in a solid block and several tracts were a few miles inland.

The earliest residential and commercial development took place closest to the bay and the all-important wharf. Simple frame stores were erected at the intersection of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street while cottages and houses were built along Summit Street, Church Street, Fels Avenue, White Avenue, Bayview Avenue, Fairhope Avenue and Magnolia Avenue. The latter rapidly became the best residential street in town. Water Oaks and Magnolia trees were planted along these streets and have since grown into impressive shade trees. Most residential lots were 66 feet by 132 feet, house setback was uniform, and streets were widened out towards the bay, creating a townscape of modest architecture on modest lots, many with views of the bay. The public beaches and parks ensured that all could enjoy the natural advantages of the site. This facilitated a healthy resort environment and hotels and rental cottages were an important component of the community.

Fairhope's buildings reflect styles prevalent in the United States from 1894-1938. The earliest houses and stores were one and one-and-a-half story frame buildings with full porches but little ornamentation. Concrete block construction became popular just after the turn of the century and remained so into the 1930s. By the teens and twenties Fairhope's architectural styles included the American Foursquare, Mission, Homestead Temple House, Workingman's Foursquare, Bungalow, and Art Deco. Stucco became popular during the 1920s and was applied to many frame buildings, such as the Colonial Inn. The Beckner-Baker House (1906) is significant for its original frame construction, though the rear gable is covered in stucco.

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Downtown Fairhope is a collection of 1920s and 1930s stucco and masonry buildings. Unfortunately many buildings have been subsequently covered by aluminum siding. Yet the old Post Office (1932), Bloxham Building (1932), Gaston Building (1924), and the Bank of Fairhope (1927) all remain basically as built and illustrate a nice range of commercial architectural expression.

North and east of the downtown are shopping centers and suburbs developed since the 1950s. To the south of the city limit are a number of black communities, most outside the city limits.

The special ambience of Fairhope may be experienced by simply walking some of the residential streets. Simple houses, shaded roadways and periodic vistas of Mobile Bay give Fairhope a special sense of place.

THE FAIRHOPE SINGLE TAX CORPORATION:¹

The Fairhoppers put theory into practice by establishing a corporation complete with constitution. Membership in the corporation cost \$100 and was open to all over the age of 18 who believed in the Single Tax Theory. The Fairhope Single Tax Corporation (FSTC) owned land (4000 acres by 1910) and leased it to both members and non-members for a period of 99 years. The land was taxed at a determined rate, exclusive of improvements, which were the property of the lessee. Hence the Single Tax.

In brief, under the Single Tax system all economic rent is taken in taxation and no profit remains for the speculator, thus leaving land available for its highest and best use. The FSTC is not interested in how much a lessee sells his improvements for, but rather that location value plays no role. In this way land speculation is stifled. Transfer prices are reviewed, and if overpriced, refused. For example, if a dilapidated frame house on a bay front lot is offered for sale at \$100,000, it is evident that this price is far above what the improvement is worth and the balance is speculation on a desirable piece of land. The FSTC will therefore deny the transfer of the leasehold until a more equitable, i.e. community value, price is arranged. No restrictions are placed on the lessee as to what he does with his land as long as he abides by the rules of the municipality. The lease does stipulate that the land use not be "physically or morally offensive to a majority of the resident members of the FSTC."

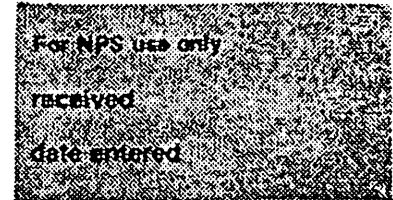
¹For a fuller and more technical elucidation of the Single Tax Theory see:

George, Henry. Progress and Poverty. New York, 1960;1879.

Alyea, Paul E. and Blanche R. Fairhope, 1894-1954. University; University of Alabama Press, 1956.

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The original constitution of 1894 stated, "...lands shall be equitably divided and leased to members at an annually appraised rental which shall equalize the varying advantages of location and natural qualities of different tracts, and convert into the treasury of the association for the common benefit of all its members, all values attaching to such lands not arising from the efforts and expenditures thereon of the lessees." Indeed, the FSTC used rental income to provide for parks, a library, utilities and public transportation. All revenues went into the general treasury of the corporation. Today the expenses of the parks, library and utilities are managed by the municipality.

Survey Methodology

The Fairhope Multiple Resource Nomination is a direct outgrowth of the Baldwin County Architectural Site Survey. This survey was conducted from October 1985 to October 1986, by John Sledge, Architectural Historian with the Mobile Historic Development Commission. The survey logged over fifteen thousand miles and documented over thirteen hundred buildings. Survey documentation consists of photographs and architectural descriptions keyed to United States Geological Survey maps. Due to the high concentration of pre-1938 structures discovered in the city of Fairhope, the Mobile Historic Development Commission initiated its National Register efforts in that community.

National Register research was greatly enhanced by the cooperation of the Fairhope Single Tax Office whose archives were made available. In addition, the Fairhope Courier (1894-1938) on microfilm at the Fairhope Public Library, proved invaluable in tracing the physical development of the community. Construction dates were provided by Sam Dyson, son of a prominent local contractor. These dates were checked against other sources including Single Tax records, old photographs, promotional pamphlets and items in the newspaper and found to be accurate.

The economic and philosophical beliefs of the Fairhoppers were determined from their own writings and direct quotes are employed in the nomination as proof of the Single Taxer's enthusiasm for egalitarian principals.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1894–1938 **Builder/Architect** Various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C-Architecture:

The Fairhope Multiple Resource Area is significant for its collection of architectural styles and types popular in the U. S. from 1894-1938 which were modified or tuned by the Single-Taxers to respond to Fairhope's egalitarian and resort environment. Resort cottages and hotels are common, particularly in the Bayfront District. Residential architecture, and the cottages, reflect national styles such as the American Four-Square and Bungalow, though modest materials create simple expressions. Fairhope's commercial sector is the finest example of a main street on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay, reflecting a variety of national styles including Neo-Classical Revival, Italian Renaissance Revival and Art Deco.

Criterion A-Community Planning:

The Fairhope Multiple Resource Area is significant for its egalitarian layout, guided by philosophic principals, which maximizes public enjoyment of scarce community resources. The beaches and bluffs were designated public parkland, streets widened out towards the bay and lots terraced, giving all a view of the water. In addition, each street terminating at the shore had a public pier. Lot sizes throughout the town were platted equitably and water oaks planted ten feet from lot lines. With no rich and no poor, a communal spirit pervaded Fairhope. The Fairhoper's philosophical beliefs were of central importance in the physical layout of the town.

Criterion A-Economics and Philosophy:

The Fairhope Multiple Resource Area is significant as the first and largest Single Tax enclave in the United States. As a practical attempt to realize the economic philosophy of Henry George, it remains the largest Single Tax enclave in the world. George's philosophy, outlined in his book Progress and Poverty (1879), advocated a single tax on land. Taxes on improvements, the products of a man's labor, were viewed as counter-productive. It is of interest to note that George himself disapproved of the Fairhope experiment, fearing failure in an unenlightened legislative atmosphere. (See THE FAIRHOPE SINGLE TAX CORPORATION, Item Number 7, page 2).

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ATTACHMENT

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approximately 130

Quadrangle name Daphne

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References See individual inventory forms.

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Verbal boundary description and justification

Boundary follows corporate limits, 1987.

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

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Sledge/Architectural Historian

organization Mobile Historic Development Commission date October 7, 1987

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

city or town Mobile state Alabama 36633

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

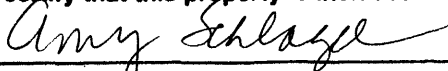
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 31, 1988

For NPS use only

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



date 6/30/88

Keeper of the National Register

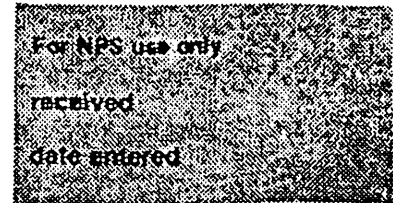
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Criterion A&B-Education:

The Fairhope Multiple Resource Area is significant as the site of the School of Organic Education. This influential experiment in progressive education attracted national attention and emulation on a limited scale. The school's founder, Marietta Johnson, stressed education of the whole child, body, mind and spirit as opposed to dull repetition of facts and testing.

Criterion A-Exploration/Settlement:

The Multiple Resource Area of Fairhope is significant as the geographical focus for a utopian experiment. Chosen for its cheapness and natural beauty, the site nevertheless lacked traditional agricultural and industrial advantages. The Fairhope settlers constructed a wharf to facilitate communication and trade and laid out streets and lots on the pine forested bluffs. The town's healthfulness and natural beauty quickly attracted a significant number of vacationers, ensuring economic viability.

Criterion A-Entertainment/Recreation:

The Fairhope Multiple Resource Area is significant as an early 20th century vacation and resort haven. Due to its healthfulness and natural beauty, Fairhope attracted seasonal visitors from Mobile and the North. Resort hotels and vacation cottages dotted the townscape and by 1916 there was a golf course. Fairhope's public beaches, among the earliest in the state, insured public access to the water and continue to be a prime community attraction.

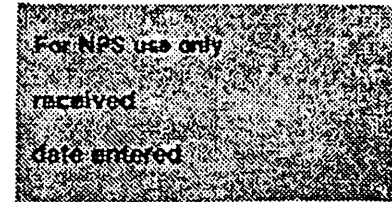
Historical Summary:

Fairhope was founded as a utopian community in 1894. Its earliest settlers were people of modest material means, fired by reform zeal. A strong communitarian spirit flourished due to a collective agreement on the Single Tax Theory's principals and practicality. Fairhope's streets, parks and architecture all reflect the philosophic beliefs of the founders to this day.

The Single Tax Theory, espoused by Henry George in his book Progress and Poverty (1879) was first put to a practical test on a large scale by the Fairhope

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colonists. Though a number of other Single Tax colonies were subsequently and independently founded, Fairhope was the first and largest. Today it remains the largest of three existing/surviving Single Tax communities.

Fairhope was an idea before it was a place. The intellectual founders of this community were natives of Des Moines, Iowa. Ernest Berry Gaston was the foremost of a group that also included S. S. Mann and James Bellangee. All of these men were upset by the poverty, class conflict, industrial violence and rampant individualism then prevalent in America. Gaston, heavily influenced by Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward, attempted to found a utopian colony in Louisiana. This colony, however, never got off the ground. He then became active with the Populist Party but was soon disillusioned and became involved with communitarianism again. It was Henry George's Progress and Poverty (1879) that gave the reform hungry Iowans focus for their zeal.

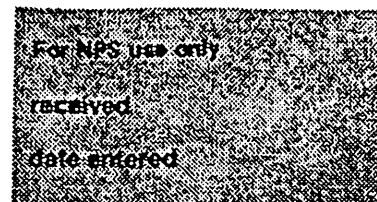
George's influential book espoused the belief that social and economic ills could be cured by fiscal reform. George proposed a "Single-Tax" as the answer. George recognized that land is limited and thus distinct from labor and capital. As land cannot be increased, there is no basis for one to claim its income. In taxing away economic rent, the community is merely taking that which it has created independent of any action by the land owner. Taxation of the products of labor or capital would be robbery. George felt that land speculation was evil; community income is lowered, maldistributed and the economy subject to boom and bust. The Single-Tax removes any profit for the speculator leaving land available for it's highest use. (See The Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, Item Number 7, page 2).

This was the philosophy around which the Iowans would build a community. On 1 September 1894 they formed the Fairhope Industrial Association under Iowa law. They proposed to "establish and maintain a model community or colony free from all forms of private monopoly." (Fairhope Courier, Des Moines, Iowa. Sept. 1, 1894)

The next step was the selection of a site to begin their communitarian experiment. S. S. Mann and James Bellangee embarked on a tour of the southern states seeking a suitable spot. Concurrent with these efforts, the small group began publication of the Fairhope Courier, a small newspaper devoted to propogating the philosophy of the Single-Tax and keeping its readers up to date on the Fairhope experiment. The Courier became the offical voice of Fairhope for many years.

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Bellangee and Mann investigated sites in Southwest Louisiana and West Tennessee but were particularly attracted by the prospects of the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. This area had a long tradition as a resort for Mobilians. Point Clear's Grand Hotel dated back to 1847 and wealthy Mobilians had built summer homes and cottages at Point Clear, Montrose, and Daphne, the county seat. The site recommended by Bellangee and Mann lay between Daphne to the north and Battles Wharf to the south and consisted of steep bluffs and overgrown pastureland. They reported enthusiastically on the climate, beauty and cheapness of the land. A vote was taken and on 1 October 1894 the Fairhope Single-Taxers chose Baldwin County, Alabama as the location of their experiment.

In November twenty-eight men, women and children made the long trek from Iowa to the Eastern Shore, boarding with Mobilians in Battles Wharf. The Fairhoper's first land purchase in January 1895 included 135 acres on the bay between two gullies, extending inland half a mile. They very quickly followed this with other purchases and by 1910 owned over 4000 acres. Since then the Fairhope Single-Tax Corporation has made several more purchases, none of them of significant acreage.

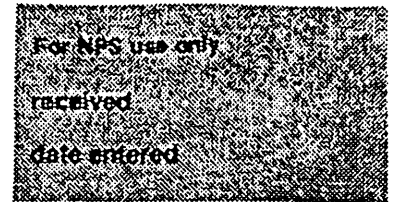
As a townsite the area offered few advantages. The land was of marginal agricultural value and covered with pine trees. An attempt to found a town there before the Civil War never got off the ground, though Alabama City shows on some old maps. Steep bluffs met the bay, some as high as fifty feet, making an arduous climb from the beach. The bay was very shallow with a gently shelving bottom, hindering water transportation, which was vital to survival.

Despite these practical difficulties the colonists very quickly made a decision regarding the bluffs and beachfront. Believing that no individual should own scarce community resources, they set aside the waterfront and bluffs as parkland. They then quickly began to draw off streets and lots. Access to the water was of primary importance so a roadway was cut down the bluff to the beach. Colonists began hauling lumber from schooners up this incline for construction of their new town. Fairhope and Magnolia Avenues were two of the first streets to be laid out. These streets are parallel until just east of the bluff where Magnolia curves into Fairhope. From here Fairhope Avenue descends the steep bluff to the water. By March 1895, five houses and a store had been constructed. Commercial development would center on Fairhope Avenue where it joined a north-south street called Section.

The need for a wharf was critical and in the Spring of 1895 wharf certificates were issued and construction soon begun at the foot of Fairhope Avenue. By the summer of 1896 Bayview Avenue was cleared and by February 1897 Section Street was extended further north to the gully.

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The Fairhope Industrial Association had no power of taxation. People leased the land for 99 years while the FIA collected the annual rent necessary to capture the whole of the economic rent from the land under lease. Membership in the FIA cost \$100. Very soon colonists were faced with non-members wanting to lease their lands. Their decision to allow non-confirmed Single-Taxers to participate would eventually lead to tension and legal conflict, which continues to this day.

Early provision was made for a school and a lot on the corner of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street was set aside for the purpose. Students of Single-Taxers were charged fifty cents and others a dollar. The initial enrollment was 26.

Despite its rude and difficult beginnings, Fairhope developed along aesthetic lines. Streets were planned to widen out towards the bay, giving everyone a view and early provision was made for planting trees and flowers. With its healthful location the town almost immediately began attracting seasonal visitors. As early as October 1896 one C. L. Coleman applied for a lot on Magnolia Avenue, "for the purpose of building thereon cottages to rent to transient visitors." (Courier, 10/12/96). Though many of these people were Mobilians, others were intellectuals from all over the world, intrigued by the Single-Tax experiment going on in the deep south.

One of the most influential of these early intellectuals was Marie Howland who came to Fairhope in 1899. The 100 residents welcomed this woman from the Credit Foncier Sinaloa Colony in Mexico. They also welcomed her 1200 volume library. She served as an associate editor for the Courier and opened her house as a public library. From its beginnings, Fairhope was to show an appreciation for the artist and the intellectual.

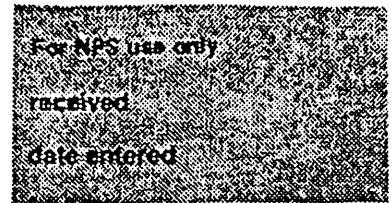
Despite Fairhoper's devout interest and belief in the Single-Tax, Henry George himself did not approve of the experiment. He was afraid the colony would fail in an unfriendly legislative atmosphere and thus hurt the idea of the Single-Tax. Other prominent Single-Taxers took an active interest however. One, Joseph Fels, a Philadelphia soap manufacturer, gave considerable sums of money to the town.

The Fairhoppers governed themselves through a council. Gaston was the secretary, or leader. True to Fairhope's avant-garde image, women were allowed to serve and vote on the council. These early utopians were people of modest material means. Yet they were intelligent and industrious. Fairhope became a town with no rich and no poor, fired with reform spirit.

A cemetery was set aside in 1900, burial free to members. For the living, the colony's first steamer or bay boat, began service to Mobile in 1901. The physical development of the town proceeded apace. In 1904 the Fairhope Improvement Company was formed as a joint stock company with a capital stock of \$25,000. Organized by R. F. Powell, an ardent Single-Taxer, the FIC planned to construct vacation cottages

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on colony land. In its first three months the FIC constructed six cottages (10 & 12 Fels still stand) and eventually added a bakery and planning mill as well as operating the steamer "Fairhope".

By 1904 Fairhope had grown to 400 residents. The Fairhope Industrial Association became the Fairhope Single-Tax Corporation under Alabama law. In 1905 a new school building was constructed, "with two splendidly lighted rooms and a hall ten feet wide through the middle." (Courier, 2/3/05). Because of its belfry, this became known popularly as the Bell Building.

Education in Fairhope was changed forever with the arrival of Marietta Johnson in 1902. A native of Minnesota and graduate of St. Cloud Normal School, Johnson assumed duties as a teacher in Fairhope. Her philosophy had been profoundly affected by several books which stressed the education of the whole child; body, mind and spirit. Called "Organic Education," this approach was used by Johnson beginning in 1907. Her school was free to locals and distinguished by the lack of formal academic strictures. By 1908 there were 50 students. Johnson's school received enthusiastic praise from all over the country. John Dewey profiled it in his Schools of Tomorrow (1913) and notables such as Upton Sinclair and Clarence Darrow made visits. In 1910 the Bell Building was purchased for the Organic School and soon a ten acre campus was provided by the Single-Tax Colony. Together with the Courier, the Organic School became closely identified with the Single-Tax experiment.

In 1908 Fairhope incorporated. Thereafter residents looked to the municipality for services and protection. Though slow to develop, this division into city and Single-Tax Colony would widen over the years.

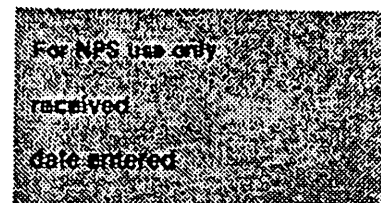
Fairhope's attraction as a resort and vacation spot continued to develop. Hotels and Inns with names like the "Canuck" were common. The best known of these establishments was the Colonial Inn with its two tiered gallery constructed in 1909, on a bluff south of Stack's Gully. More modest hotels included the Hotel Murray, "a few doors down Magnolia Avenue, one of the best residence streets." (Fairhope on Mobile Bay, Fairhope Courier, p. 23 Sept. 1915).

Private residences were unabashedly modest. A promotional brochure in 1915 noted, "Fairhope abounds in modest cozy homes. The palaces of the "predator rich" are not found in Fairhope." (Ibid. 16) The Courier noted the absence "here of the shanties and dilapidated buildings which are found in some quarter of almost every town." (Courier, 11/15/04).

The lack of a rail connection was viewed as a hindrance to community growth. Gaston reasoned that a rail link with Robertsdale, 14 miles to the east, would not only increase the accessibility of colony land but improve the prospects for

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farming in the area by providing an easy market center. Throughout 1913 efforts were made to provide Fairhope with just such a rail connection. Robertsdale, connected by a spur off the L&N from Bay Minette in 1905, was prospering as a truck farming center and was attracting immigrants from the mid-west in growing numbers. Despite the advantages of a link with Robertsdale, no more than a mile of track was ever laid in Fairhope, from the pier into downtown and the project was soon abandoned for lack of funds. Efforts at growing satsumas on colony land met with a little better success until several freezes illustrated the futility of this project. Despite these setbacks, Fairhope continued to grow and prosper as a resort.

The Single-Tax Colony was proud of the fact that by 1915, with municipal limits of a mile and a half, 4/5 of the population and all the business was on its land, even though it owned less than half the land within the town limits. To many, this was a vindication of the Single-Tax philosophy. Gaston noted in 1920 that many newcomers simply accepted the Single-Tax as the status-quo. Fairhope's population at the time was 853.

Downtown's rude wooden buildings began to be replaced with more substantial brick, block and tile ones during the 1920s and 1930s. The local contractor Marmaduke Dyson, an English immigrant, constructed many of the new buildings. His company promised, "Individuality and distinctiveness can be incorporated into your new home or building through employment of the natural resources of our locality." (Courier, 4/7/27). Dyson and Company built the Gaston Building (1924), Post Office (1932), Bank of Fairhope (1927) and Bloxham Building (1932) in addition to dozens of residences. The work of formal architects is rare in Fairhope, one example, however, is the Bank of Fairhope (1927) designed by Mobile architect William March.

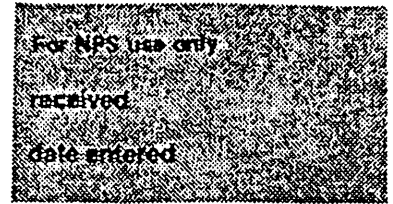
In 1932 the Single-Tax Corporation turned over all parkland to the city. This continued the drift between the FSTC and the city. After 1932 the FSTC was concerned with its own administration and the city had a life of its own.

Construction of the Causeway in 1927 put the bay boats out of business and cut into tourism. Before construction of the Causeway, travelers between Mobile and Florida found the huge Fairhope wharf the most convenient jump-off point to cross Mobile Bay. The Causeway provided a motor route to the north across the bay and eliminated much of the traffic through Fairhope.

Fairhope remained a popular haven for Mobilians and Northerners familiar with the town however. The community's high rating in Safe Places East during the 1970s encouraged a spate of retirees into the community. Today (1987) Fairhope's population is just over 7,000. The Courier, now known as the Eastern Shore Courier, continues publication, though no longer wed to reform issues.

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The public pier and beaches are intensively used by the public and the present mayor is committed to beautification and downtown revitalization. The town holds an annual Arts and Crafts Festival and the Single-Tax Corporation continues its 93 year committment to the economic philosophy of Henry George.

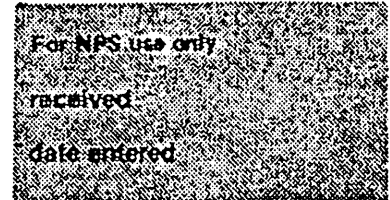
Was the Fairhope experiment a success? How did the founders feel about their efforts? E. B. Gaston himself felt that Fairhope was a success in that a model community had been created. Yet a missionary effort was never developed and no other town in Baldwin County converted to the Single Tax. In this sense, Fairhope was a failure.

Within the national context of Single-Tax experiments, Fairhope was the first and largest. Others soon followed, including Arden, Delaware (1900) and Free Acres, New Jersey (1907). Yet these were much smaller than Fairhope and though they still exist, Fairhope is the most important of the three.

Fairhope's significance lies in the fact that the entire community was founded on and guided by intellectual principals and utopian ideals. Despite the town's gradual evolution into the municipal mainstream, the concept of the Single Tax remains at the core.

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1

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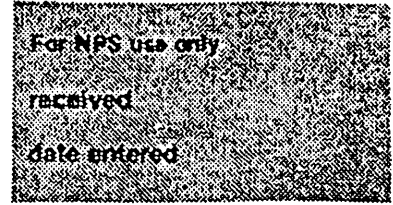
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Chronology/Glossary

1880s & 1890s

- America rife with industrial violence, strikes, class conflict and rampant individualism. This social and political climate leads to a significant utopian movement all across the country. Books such as Henry George's Progress and Poverty (1879) and Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (1888) examine social, economic and political ills and propound the belief that a perfect society is possible.

- A group of reform hungry Iowans, led by E. B. Gaston seize on the theories of Henry George as a cure to society's ills. They determine to create a colony, or model community, to demonstrate the practicality of George's ideas.

- The core of George's philosophy is the concept of a Single Tax. George believed that a single tax on land, rather than on improvements, would discourage speculation and encourage the highest and best use of resources.

1 September 1894

- The Iowans form the Fairhope Industrial Association under Iowa law and plan to found a community based on the principals of the Single Tax.

- They also begin publication of The Fairhope Courier as the official paper of the experiment. The paper is circulated among Single-Tax advocates worldwide and will remain the official voice of Fairhope well into the 20th century.

1 October 1894

- The Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay is chosen as the site of the experiment because of natural beauty and cheapness of the land.

November 1894

- 28 men, women and children make the long journey from Iowa to the site of their new town.

January 1895

- First land purchase, 135 acres on Mobile Bay between two large ravines. Further purchases will follow until some 4000 acres are acquired by 1910.

Spring 1895

- Initial streets laid out and lots platted. A long wharf, crucial to survival, is constructed. Five houses and a store comprise the town.

1896

- Fairhope quickly establishes a reputation as a resort for Mobilians.

1898

- Six houses constructed.

1899

- Population of 100. Non-confirmed Single Taxers are allowed to settle.
- Arrival of Marie Howland from "Credit Foncier" Colony at Topolobampo, Mexico. Her massive book collection becomes the public library.

1900

- Single-Tax enclave independently founded at Arden, Delaware.

1901

- Regular steamboat service to Mobile initiated.

1902

- Arrival of Marietta Johnson. She begins teaching in the local school.

1903

- 16 houses constructed.

1904

- Population 400.
- 25 houses constructed.
- Construction of Bell Building as a district school.
- Fairhope Single-Tax Corporation formed under Alabama law. Older Fairhope Industrial Association is dissolved.
- Fairhope Improvement Company Single-Tax endeavor, formed as a joint stock company to promote development on colony land.

1906

- FIC has constructed six cottages and operates the steamer "Fairhope."
- 21 houses constructed.

1907

- Marietta Johnson begins School of Organic Education. 500 students by 1908.
- Single-Tax enclave independently founded at Free Acres, New Jersey.

1908

- Fairhope incorporated. Begin drift between municipality and FSTC.

1909

- Colonial Inn built.
- Upton Sinclair enrolls his son in the Organic School.
- Independent Single-Tax enclave founded near Harvard at Tahants, Massachusetts.

1910

- Bell Building and ten acres given to Organic School by FSTC.
- Magnolia Beach development begun south of Single-Tax purchases. Land is deeded.

1911

- Single-Tax enclave independently founded at Halidon, Maine.

1912

- Fairhope population 590.

1913

- People's Railroad completes one mile of track. The planned link with Robertsdale will not occur.
- Limited success at growing satsuma's.
- John Dewey visits Organic School and gives enthusiastic endorsement.

1915

- Free Acres, New Jersey has forty families.
- Tahants, Massachusetts has nine leases.
- Arden, Delaware has one hundred thirty leases.
- Fairhope has city limits of 1½ miles, population over 600, public library, phone service, 250 leases.

1918

- 131 students at Organic School.

1920

- Population 853.
- Gaston notes newcomers accept Single-Tax as the status quo.

1922

- 36 new buildings constructed, 28 on colony land.

1920s & 30s

- Downtown begins to take on its present appearance as stuccoed clay tile and brick buildings replace frame stores.
- Streets paved.

1927

- Causeway to Mobile constructed.
- Decline of bayboats.

1930

- Population 1549.
- Depression. Local bank weathers it.

1932

- FSTC turns over parkland to City.

1937 & 38

- E. B. Gaston and Marietta Johnson die.

1968

- New pier.

1970s

- Influx of retirees.

1987

- Population 7,000.

GLOSSARY

- Single-Tax Theory:** The philosophy espoused by Henry George in Progress and Poverty (1879) and subsequently adopted by the Fairhoppers. This philosophy advocated a single tax on land, regardless of improvements. This was intended to eliminate land speculation, stimulate industry and improve the money-making potential of the land.
- Fairhoppers:** The name adopted by the Iowan Single-Taxers. They believed they had a "fair hope" of success in their endeavor. Indeed, Fairhope existed as an idea before it was a geographical reality.
- Fairhope Industrial Association (FIA):** Created under Iowa law on 1 September 1894 by the Iowa Single-Taxers. They adopted a constitution and proposed to establish a model community to demonstrate the practicality of the Single-Tax Theory.
- Fairhope Single-Tax Corporation (FSTC):** Chartered under Alabama law in 1904. This replaced the FIA. Membership cost \$100 and was open to anyone over 18 years of age who believed in the Single-Tax principals. The Corporation leased its lands to members and non-members at an annually appraised rental. Leases were generally for a period of 99 years and allowed the leasee use of the land and ownership of any improvements.
- School of Organic Education:** Founded by Marietta Johnson in 1907. This experiment in progressive education attracted national attention and emulation on a limited scale. Johnson advocated the education of the whole child, body, mind and spirit. Grades were abolished as counterproductive and emphasis was placed upon tasks.
- Fairhope Improvement Company (FIC):** Created in 1904 as a joint stock company by the Single-Taxers. Its purpose was to promote the development of colony land. This goal was pursued by the construction and letting of cottages and commercial enterprises such as a bakery.
- Fairhope Single-Tax Colony:** The town of Fairhope was referred to as a colony, or enclave, during its first decades of existence. It was a colony in the sense that it was settled in an undeveloped area by a people united in philosophic principals. After the colony incorporated in 1908 a drift between municipality and Single-Tax Corporation began and the term colony is less accurate. Also non-Single-Taxers outnumbered Single-Taxers.
- People's Railroad:** A scheme was devised to give Fairhope a rail link to the town of Robertsdale, some ten miles to the east. By the turn of the century Robertsdale was a thriving commercial center and truck farming was an important component of the economy. A spur line was extended from Bay Minette in 1905, vastly stimulating the agricultural development of central Baldwin County. The Fairhoppers attempted construction of a rail line from the pier to Robertsdale. Funds were obtained through public subscription but only a mile of track was ever laid.

6/3/88

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Fairhope MRA
State Baldwin County, ALABAMA

Nomination/Type of Review Date/Signature

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| | Cover | <u>Substantive Review</u> | Keeper <u>Amy Schlager 6/30/88</u> |
| SM | 1. Bank of Fairhope | | Keeper <u>Amy Schlager 7/1/88</u> |
| | | <u>Entered in the National Register</u> | Attest _____ |
| 2. | Beckner House | | Keeper <u>Shelton Byrum 7/1/88</u> |
| | | | Attest _____ |
| SW | 3. Bloxham, Carl L., Building | <u>Substantive Review</u> | Keeper <u>Carol D. Shull 6-30-88</u> |
| | | | Attest _____ |
| 4. | Fairhope Bayfront District | <u>Entered in the National Register</u> | Keeper <u>Shelton Byrum 7/1/88</u> |
| | | | Attest _____ |
| 5. | Gaston Building | <u>Entered in the National Register</u> | Keeper <u>Shelton Byrum 7/1/88</u> |
| | | | Attest _____ |
| 6. | Golf, Gun & Country Club | <u>Entered in the National Register</u> | Keeper <u>Shelton Byrum 7/1/88</u> |
| | | | Attest _____ |
| 7. | School of Organic Education | <u>Entered in the National Register</u> | Keeper <u>Shelton Byrum 7/1/88</u> |
| | | | Attest _____ |
| 8. | US Post Office | <u>Entered in the National Register</u> | Keeper <u>Shelton Byrum 7/1/88</u> |
| | | | Attest _____ |
| 9. | White Avenue Historic District | <u>Entered in the National Register</u> | Keeper <u>Shelton Byrum 7/1/88</u> |
| | | | Attest _____ |
| 10. | Zurhorst House | <u>Entered in the National Register</u> | Keeper <u>Shelton Byrum 7/1/88</u> |
| | | | Attest _____ |