
Since 1994, the Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation have joined forces to sponsor Places in Peril, a program that highlights significant endangered properties. As awareness yields commitment, and commitment yields action, these endangered properties can be saved and returned to their places as treasured landmarks. Places in Peril has helped save many important landmarks that may otherwise have been lost.

2021 Places in Peril

Hotel Wilson, Clanton, Chilton County

Local builder Peyton D. Wilson completed construction on Hotel Wilson in 1914. In its heyday, the hotel offered travelers a modern and convenient place to stay. The hotel originally featured forty-two rooms, a lobby, a dining room, and a cellar. The construction of Lay Dam on the nearby Coosa River in 1913 resulted in a boom period for Clanton. Lay Dam garnered national recognition as a leading producer of hydroelectric power, and people flocked from other parts of the state and country to relocate near the dam. Many of these people spent their first days, weeks, and even months residing at Hotel Wilson before settling into their homesteads. As the industrial age contributed to the hotel's rise in popularity, it likewise factored into its demise. Like many small towns in Alabama, once the railroad phased out passenger lines the hotel began to decline and closed in the mid-1970s. Located across the now non-active railroad tracks, the hotel building has seen little activity in the past fifty years.

Hotel Wilson suffers from deferred maintenance and unrepaired damage from a 2006 fire. However, Homegirl Industry and Youth Towers, two non-profit organizations, have plans to renovate the building for use as a shelter for girls aging out of foster care. The two upper floors will be used as housing, while the bottom floor will have a cafe and commercial kitchen for residents to learn valuable career skills. The Alabama Historical Commission listed Hotel Wilson in the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage on May 22, 2008.

Mellow Valley High School, Cragford, Clay County

Mellow Valley School was constructed in 1910 for the Mellow Valley Community. The school not only served grades one through twelve but also was the hub of the community and surrounding area. Several buildings were added over the years, including an agricultural building, gymnasium, and lunchroom. The school closed in 2003 and sat vacant until the Mellow Valley Alumni & Friends Association obtained the property from the Clay County Board of Education on August 14, 2014.

When the Association took control of the property, the buildings had been vandalized and were suffering from years of deferred maintenance, including a leaking deteriorated roof. The community has worked diligently since 2014 to preserve the old school. The front and side elevations of the school are intact, but due to the poor condition and building code issues, maintaining insurance for the property has been a challenge. The Association hopes to bring awareness to the school with the Places in Peril listing while they work to reestablish the school as a prominent place in the Mellow Valley community.

Dupree School, Ashford, Houston County

Dupree School was constructed in 1904. Simon B. Harper bought forty acres of land from B.M. Hamrick, B.Z. Hamrick, and Rosa Hamrick on October 19, 1904, with one acre set aside for the school. The schoolhouse

educated community children in grades one through six. Dupree School is a typical rural school building featuring a large classroom that can be separated into two rooms by folding doors. The building sits on brick piers and has wood clapboard siding. The school operated until the late 1940s or early 1950s when the school closed. On November 3, 1953, the state of Alabama transferred ownership of the building to the Center Community Club, and the building became their meeting place.

Over the years, Dupree School has been used as a gathering place for social events such as parties and family reunions. The Community Club offered home demonstration classes in cooking, sewing, and quilting. Many gathered on Saturday nights as local musicians entertained with guitar picking and singing. The building also served as polling site for local, state, and national elections.

In 2018, Hurricane Michael caused considerable damage to the roof, leading to significant interior water damage. Vandalism has also contributed to the poor condition of the structure. Windows have been broken out, some of the furnishings were stolen, and door locks are continuously damaged to gain entry to the building. The preservation of this property is vital to the community and its history.

Tanner Williams Old Schoolhouse, Wilmer, Mobile County

Constructed in 1915, the Tanner Williams Old Schoolhouse is in the heart of the rural community of Tanner Williams in Mobile County. In July 1914, the Mobile County School Board of Education recommended that a school be built near Pringle Still (currently known as Turpentine) for the consolidation of the Tanner School and the Williams School. Mr. J. J. Tanner donated the land and constructed the school building. Workers also dismantled a portion of the former Williams School, numbered each board, and rebuilt it on the new school site.

In 1921, construction began on an 11,000-square-foot brick building across the street from the original school building on Tanner Williams Road, which was completed in 1924. The Tanner Williams School continued to expand over the years, but the original 1915 schoolhouse remained largely unchanged and continued to serve as additional classroom space for many years.

The school ceased using the building in 1984, and it sat empty for over a decade. In 1995, individuals from the area, mostly composed of former students, established the Tanner Williams Civic and Historical Society (TWCHS). The organization purchased the school from the Mobile County Public School System with the primary goal of restoring the original schoolhouse.

In early 2019, an inspection highlighted the building's problems, including water damage, roof and window deterioration, termite damage, and numerous other issues. TWCHS continues to care for the building with only a small group of consistent volunteers. The building serves as their monthly meeting place, and the community is enlivened with annual events such as the May Day Celebration and the Cotton Festival, all proceeds of which go toward the upkeep of the school and Tanner Williams Community Park.

Tankersley School, Hope Hull, Montgomery County

In 1917, Jacob W. Williams arrived in the Hope Hull community and established a community school for Black children. Under the leadership of the Negro Community Trustees Board, the school operated in the old Pythian Masonic Hall. However, overcrowding in the Hall dictated the need for a separate schoolhouse. The school board required fifteen acres to build a school, and local citizens worked diligently with education officials to raise funds to purchase the first five acres from Dr. William Tankersley, a member of the Montgomery County Board of Education at the time. Citizens then successfully acquired the additional ten acres that adjoined the original acreage. The Black community provided \$1,500, the public \$2,800, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund \$1,000. In 1922, the community successfully constructed the two-teacher type Tankersley Rosenwald School for Black children in grades one through six. The school served the community until 1967, when the Board of

Education closed it due to integration. The school was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on January 22, 2009.

In recent years, the Tankersley Rosenwald School has suffered damage from storms and deferred maintenance. A small but dedicated group of boosters are committed to the school's survival. The building is highly threatened due to a significant collapse of the roof, rafters, and floor in one of the building's classrooms. Lack of attention to the problem will lead to the complete failure of the structure, and the unfortunate loss of one of the two remaining Rosenwald schools in Montgomery County. In the summer of 2021, Auburn University documented the school using 3D scan technology, which visually depicts both the significance of the structure and the extent of damage to it.

Old Munford High School, Munford, Talladega County

Old Munford High School is in the heart of Munford. Construction began in 1922 and the original two-story section features a beautiful rock cladding. Additional sections were added in 1934 and 1942 due to an increase in the school's population. In 2001, the school's interior underwent renovations and windows were replaced. The Talladega Board of Education transferred ownership to the town of Munford in 2008. The former lunchroom now serves as a Senior Citizens Center. The school has faced neglect over the years due to lack of funding, and the town hopes awareness about the historic structure brings new life into its walls. The Munford community values the old school and is committed to its preservation.

Munford High School is a rare resource, as only a handful of rock-built schools remain in Alabama. The school, which may be the largest surviving chert-rock structure in Talladega County, represents a unique type of vernacular construction found in certain North and North-Central Alabama counties. These schools were constructed primarily during the 1920s through the 1940s, and many of these structures have disappeared from the Alabama landscape.

The Alabama Historical Commission listed the school in the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage on September 26, 2007, and in November 2021 provided a grant funds for the school's rehabilitation.

Camp Hill Select Properties, Camp Hill, Tallapoosa County

Settlement started around 1830 in what is now known as Camp Hill, which is in Tallapoosa County. The community was originally called either Burnt Bull or Ashbank, but it is believed that its current name was adopted due to people camping in the area. Camp Hill was incorporated in 1895.

During the mid-nineteenth century, like many towns in the area Camp Hill primarily focused on agriculture. The railroad brought growth and change to the area when the Savannah and Memphis Railroad arrived in 1870. Camp Hill's downtown shops held numerous stores and businesses including two dry goods stores, a pharmacy, a post office, clothiers, a furniture store, theaters, banks, dining, and fueling stations. African American businesses were housed in some of the buildings' basement level and accessed through a service road in the back of the buildings. Little is known about these businesses, but further research is ongoing. Once passenger trains ceased operations in the 1970s, the commercial center of town began to see a decline in population, and many downtown businesses closed. Also, by the mid-twentieth century the railroad was replaced by cotton gins and a brickyard as the town's main economic drivers.

Current commercial buildings are in various conditions ranging from good to ruinous. A lack of financial resources to repair and maintain the structures is an issue for many property owners. The newfound interest in Camp Hill is attributed to Emberly Zellars. She and her grandfather, John Zellars, are determined to bring awareness to preserve the Camp Hill community. Through the Zellars' perseverance and dedication, they hope to see Camp Hill's downtown buildings restored and this historic area revitalized.

Ackerville Baptist Church of Christ, Ackerville, Wilcox County

The Ackerville Baptist Church of Christ congregation joined the Bethlehem Association of Baptist Churches in 1844 with 28 members. Membership had risen to 79 by 1847 and in 1848, the church completed construction of a new building in the Oak Hill community. The somewhat larger community of Ackerville, less than a mile away, experienced greater growth after the Civil War, and the Stuart family, a founding family of the church, and neighbors decided the church could better serve the needs of the community by relocating to Ackerville. At the time, a US Post Office, a doctor's office, a grocery store, a sawmill, and a cotton gin were all located nearby. The Pine Barren Baptist Association was formed in 1850, and the Ackerville Baptist Church of Christ became a member of the Association. The years between 1850 and 1894 were fruitful ones for the church, with membership rising to 103. At the turn of the twentieth century, the church recorded 123 members and had an active Sunday School, a weekly prayer meeting, and a preaching service once a month. By 1920, membership had begun to decline, with 71 recorded members. In 1943, membership had dropped to sixteen, and the church ceased regular meetings.

Ackerville Baptist Church of Christ was listed in the National Register Historic Places on April 18, 2003 for its distinctive characteristics of the Greek Revival architecture with vernacular influences. The church includes a simple, rectangular block style with no projections, a symmetrical plan, smooth wall surfaces without ornamentation, a roof ridge running from front to back, front doors with rectangular transoms, and a full facade temple-form portico with simplified square Doric columns in the front. Methods of construction typical of the period and style are exhibited in the building.

Ackerville Baptist Church of Christ is presently in a severe condition of disrepair due to a large tree that fell into the structure in the fall of 2020. Portions of the roof are no longer present, and the rear wall has collapsed. The structure is mostly open to the elements, the interior flooring continues to deteriorate, and the rear wall and several windows require extensive repairs to encapsulate the building from the elements. The Wilcox County Historical Commission has been made aware of the condition of the property, and they are currently working to secure funds to remove the tree from inside the church.