



# ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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78th Annual Meeting | April 9-11, 2026 | Fairhope, Alabama

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*Cover photo courtesy of Fairhope Single Tax Corporation*

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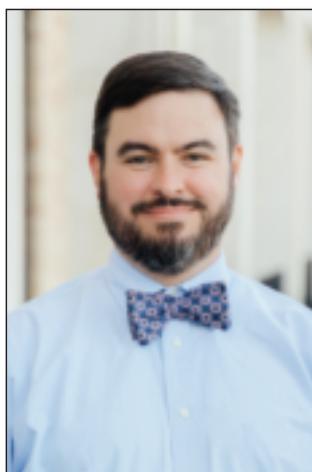
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*Founded in 1947, the Alabama Historical Association is the oldest statewide historical society in Alabama. The AHA provides opportunities for meaningful engagement with the past through publications, meetings, historical markers, and other programs. The AHA is a volunteer-led and membership-supported organization. Our members are from every walk of life but share a common interest in Alabama history and a belief in its value for society today. Visit [www.alabamahistory.net](http://www.alabamahistory.net) for more information.*



I was overjoyed to see so many of you on our Fall 2025 Pilgrimage to beautiful Guntersville, Alabama. The Guntersville Historical Society was a gracious host, and the community welcomed us with open arms. Truly, the effort of a committed group of local historians has made the town an example of how to preserve and promote Alabama history.

### **Dr. Matthew Downs**

For our Spring 2026 Annual Meeting, we're visiting another community passionate about historical preservation: Fairhope. Located on the bluffs overlooking Mobile Bay, the town's unique roots date to 1894 when a group of reformers arrived to found a community based on what leader E. B. Gaston called "cooperative individualism." They embraced Henry George's theory that a single tax on property might provide enough revenue to care for the needs of society. The Fairhope Single Tax Corporation (FSTC) continues to play a central role in the life of the city: preserving natural spaces, including the bayfront parks; supporting community services like the public library and the volunteer fire department; working with the city to improve infrastructure; and, importantly for this organization, preserving Fairhope's past.

Many of you know of Fairhope's illustrious literary history. Historian and author Alan Samry has catalogued it for us here in the newsletter, and we'll kick off our meeting on Thursday with a local authors roundtable at the Fairhope Public Library. That event will be followed by a reception at Coastal Alabama Community College, our gracious host for much of the meeting. Located in the heart of town, Coastal is in walking distance of downtown restaurants, shops, and sites of historical interest, including

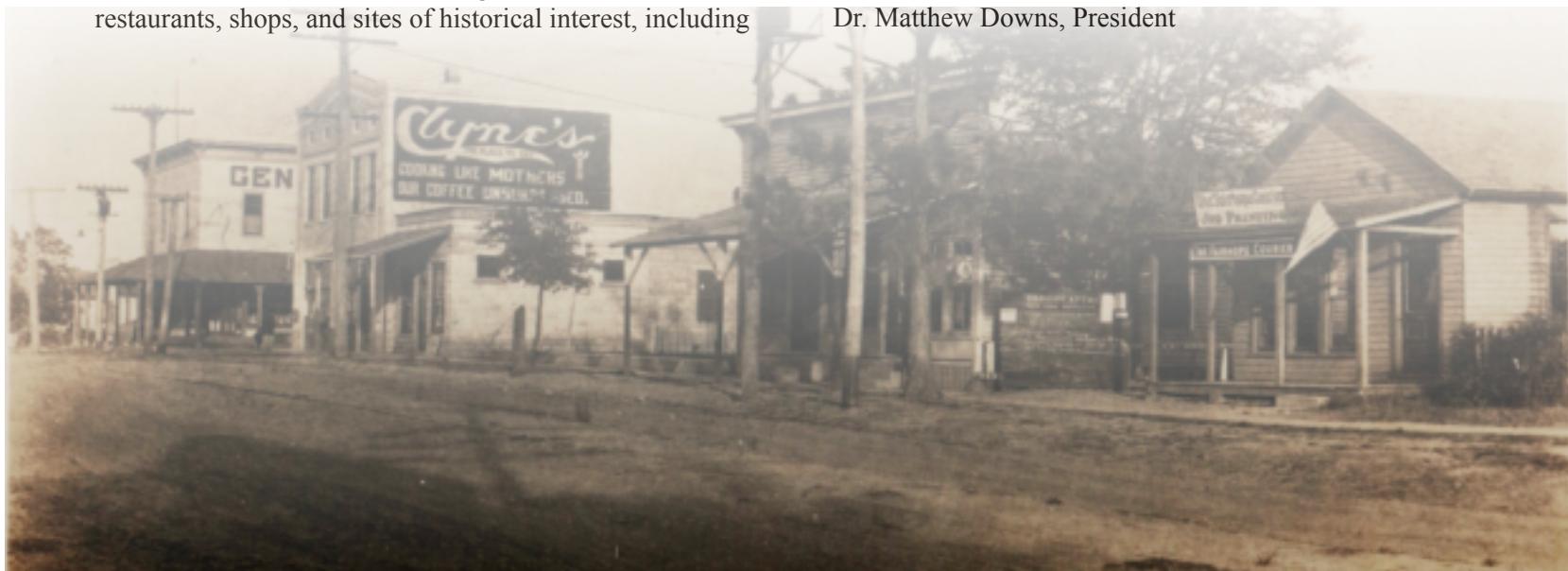
Fairhope United Methodist Church, where we'll have our Friday banquet and Saturday luncheon.

On Friday, our opening session keynote will feature a presentation by Hope Community, a local organization dedicated to improving the lives of all Fairhoppers. The group has done amazing work preserving and promoting the town's African American history. Ben Severance and the program committee have assembled an all-star line-up of presentations for the Friday and Saturday concurrent sessions; I'm sure that, like me, you'll have trouble deciding on which ones to attend. That afternoon, we'll spread out across Fairhope and the surrounding region on a number of exciting tours, all of which are detailed in the pages that follow.

Our featured speaker at Friday's banquet is the celebrated author Sonny Brewer. A distinguished member of Fairhope's literati, Brewer is best known for *The Poet of Tolstoy Park*, which tells the story of Henry Stuart, the "hermit" who lived in a small round building he built himself. Brewer's work is particularly relevant today, given that he and a passionate group of supporters have raised the funds necessary to move Stuart's roundhouse from its current location, the parking lot of an office complex, to Fairhope's new Flying Creek Nature Preserve, an environment more in fitting with Stuart's original experience.

I've always found that the best part of the Alabama Historical Association are its members and friends, and so I look forward to catching up with all of you in Fairhope. The town has a fascinating history and, just as important, a group of people passionate about preserving the past for future generations. I'll see you all in the "Utopia by the Bay."

Dr. Matthew Downs, President



# Fairhope and the Eastern Shore

## A WRITER'S COLONY

By Alan Samry

The story of Fairhope's unique founding started with ideas, most of which came from books.

Novels, nonfiction, history, and biographies on topics ranging from reformists, socialists, single taxers, to Populists were instrumental in a group of Iowans and others starting a model community on Mobile Bay in 1894. Since then, Eastern Shore writers, journalists, publishers, visiting writers, educators, and intellectuals, and sites like the Fairhope Public Library, bookstores, and a writer's cottage have made for a rich Gulf Coast literary arts colony gumbo.

On December 2, 1989, the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation (FSTC) dedicated an obelisk on the bluff above Mobile Bay. It honors Henry George, author of *Progress and Poverty*, and his principles of land, labor, and capital. The monument rests in Henry George Park, the only park honoring Henry George and Fairhope, the first and longest-tenured continuous single tax colony in the United States.

Ernest Berry Gaston (1861-1937) married ideas contained in nonfiction books and novels to lessons



Ernest Berry Gaston. Courtesy of Fairhope Museum of History, Cathy Donelson Collection

learned from failed experimental communities to found the colony, which had a "fair hope of success" on Mobile Bay. In his visionary tract, "True Cooperative Individualism," he joined the practical and the ideal to set up the Fairhope Industrial Association. The association wrote a constitution, bought land along the bay, and leased parcels to individuals for residences and businesses. Gaston's goal for a model community included public ownership of utilities and

transportation, free enterprise in production and trade, and individual initiative within the mindset of community cooperation. His tract was distributed through the mail, then published in the Populist newspaper *Liberty Bell* in 1893 and in *The Fairhope Courier* in 1895. Gaston was Fairhope's most prolific writer but never wrote a book. He was too busy writing, editing, and publishing a weekly newspaper, which he bought in 1903. If that wasn't enough, he also ran the colony as the FSTC's secretary for forty years. "Making good theories work...and we are doing it," was the newspaper's masthead.

Upon arriving downtown, visitors can't miss "A Matter



(Left) Ernest Berry Gaston outside of The Fairhope Courier office. The person on the right is likely his son, Cornelius Gaston. Courtesy of Fairhope Single Tax Corporation



*Courtesy of Alan Samry*

of Fiction,” a 5,000-pound corten steel open book sculpture by Birmingham artist Deedee Morrison. Commissioned by the Friends of the Fairhope Public Library, the book was installed in 2012 in front of the library at 501 Fairhope Avenue to honor our literary culture.

Marie Stevens Case Howland (1836-1921), utopian socialist, newspaper publisher, journalist and lifelong suffragist, believed in communal living. She participated in four alternative living communities, including The Familistere, or The Social Palace, in Guise, France. After her husband Edward died in the socialist community of Topolobampo, Mexico, Howland came to Fairhope. She brought her collection of books which became the Fairhope Free Public Library collection in 1900. It was housed in her home until a library was built in 1908 on the corner of Summit Street and Magnolia Avenue. Fairhope’s first librarian

also served as the associate editor of the *Fairhope Courier* with a regular column, “Mrs. Howland’s Letters,” where she shared her correspondences on a wide range of topics. Howland wrote a novel in 1874 titled *Papa’s Own Girl*. It was shelved in the Boston Public Library, but librarians refused to lend it due to its “coarse language.” A bust of Howland, made by local artist Frances Neumann, is located inside Fairhope Public Library. The original library at 10 North Summit Street is being renovated and will be the new FSTC headquarters.

Above the bay in Bluff Park south of Fairhope Avenue is another Neumann sculpture of Marietta Louise Pierce Johnson (1864-1938), leader of America’s Progressive Education Association and co-founder of the School of Organic Education in 1904. Johnson was a teacher, educator, principal, curriculum coordinator, and so much more. “A fine body, an intelligent mind and a sweet spirit,” was her motto, and she pursued that goal through a program of hands-on learning for her students. Johnson spent her time running the school and often toured the country writing and speaking about Organic and the Progressive Education movement. In 1907, the school moved into the Bell Building and the surrounding ten-acre campus, which is now Coastal Alabama Community College. The recently restored Bell Building serves as art classrooms and houses the Marietta Johnson Museum. Her book, *Youth in a World of Men: The Child, The Parent, and the Teacher*, was published in 1929 and was the capstone of her educational vision.

Renowned writer Upton Sinclair (1878-1968), along with his wife Meta, lived in Fairhope for the 1908-1909



*Marie Howland’s home, which served as the first public library, is on the left. The building on the right is the Fairhope Public Library (1919). The original 1908 library is on the left side of the building. Courtesy of Fairhope Museum of History, Cathy Donelson Collection*



*Marietta Johnson with School of Organic Education students in front of the Bell Building. Courtesy of Fairhope Museum of History, Cathy Donelson Collection*

school year while their son David attended the School of Organic Education. While in Fairhope, the man who brought us *The Jungle*, which led to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act to regulate slaughterhouses, chucked his vegan diet for Salisbury steaks. Sinclair worked on what would become *Love's Pilgrimage* while in Fairhope, where he was very productive. During a three-day fast at his cottage on the beach, he wrote a play, "The Naturewoman," "a comedy sprang full-grown into my brain."

In 1923, a group of local writers meeting regularly penning prose formalized. They started the Scribblers and were affiliated with the National League of American Pen Women.

Sarah Willard Hiestand wintered in Fairhope and birthed the Shakespeare Festival, celebrating the Bard's birthday, beginning in 1922. Hiestand produced and directed the plays using adapted versions of Shakespeare she wrote for children. The plays were free, a gift from Hiestand, popular, and performed on the beach with the audience in the gullies. A newspaper clipping from 1924 announced that they were "Given by Fairhope's townspeople, teachers, and pupils." The Beginner's Shakespeare series was published in Boston by D. C. Heath. In 1900 and 1901, Hiestand penned four editions, including, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Comedy of the Tempest*, *The Comedy of the Winter's Tale*, and *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) opted to "winter" in Alabama in 1920, a year after publishing *Winesburg, Ohio*. During his prolific stay, he wrote poetry and fiction and enjoyed his time on the bay until his wife

joined him. Anderson completed *The Triumph of the Egg* short story collection, published in 1921, while in Fairhope, finished the first draft of what would become *Poor White*, and began another book, *Many Marriages*.

Paul Alyea (1899-1975) spent summers in Fairhope. An economics professor at the University of Alabama, he was asked by FSTC Secretary Cornelius "Corn" Gaston to write about the history of the colony. Paul and wife Blanche Alyea (1905-1988) wrote *Fairhope 1894-1954: The Story of a Single Tax Colony*, which was published by the University of Alabama Press in 1956; a revised version, with a new introduction by another Fairhoper, the late Tenant McWilliams (1943-2023), appeared in 2022.

After years as a journalist, educator, and published poet, Frances Durham (1889-1972) moved to Fairhope. A past president of the Alabama Writers Conclave (now Cooperative), and longtime member of the League of American Penwomen, she quickly linked up with writerly friends on both sides of the bay and started Pensters, a writing group based out of the Fairhope Public Library. Pensters is currently celebrating its sixtieth anniversary. It has counted among its members Susan Brannan Walker, Frye Gaillard, Bob Zellner, Judith Richards, and, most impressively, Jule Moon, who continues to write every day as she approaches her 107<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In 1966, Page and Palette, a bookstore and artist supply shop, opened. It was bought two years later by Betty Joe Wolff (1927-2018). In the early 2000s, it was purchased by her granddaughter, Karin Wilson. The store is now managed by Karin and Keifer Wilson's daughter Tyler. Page and Palette, "the turnstile of Fairhope," according to Rick Bragg, continues to bring nationally known authors to our community and hosts authors in their on-site event space, The Book Cellar.

Diana Caldwell opened a used bookstore, The Book Inn, in 1979. Forty years on, it too continues as a family-owned bookstore.

Paul Gaston (1928-2019), the son of Cornelius Gaston and grandson of Ernest Gaston, graduated from the Organic School but moved away to become a professor of history at the University of Virginia, where he took an active role in the Civil Rights Movement. A preeminent scholar and Lillian Smith Award winner, he penned three books about Fairhope: *Women of Fairhope*, *Man and Mission*, and *Coming of Age in Utopia*. Any one or all three books will serve you well in appreciating and understanding Fairhope's unique historic and economic trajectory.

Fannie Flagg is the literary queen of Fairhope. For



*Performance of Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew in 1929. Courtesy of Fairhope Museum of History, Cathy Donelson Collection*

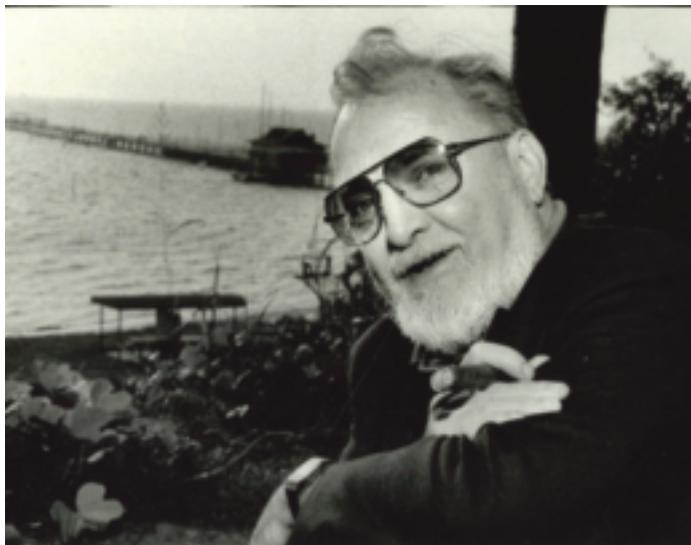


*Fannie Flagg.*  
Courtesy of  
Random House

decades, she split her time between residences in Fairhope and California. She wrote several books, including the screenplay for *Fried Green Tomatoes*, in her

home on Bayview. Her latest book, *Something to Look Forward To*, is a collection of short stories.

It was William E. Butterworth (1929-2019), AKA W. E. B. Griffin and a handful of other pseudonyms, who said Fairhope is home to more writers than readers. Butterworth joined the Army in 1946 at sixteen and served in the Korean War. It's Butterworth whose writing life put Fairhope on the map. He lived in Daphne but came to Fairhope to write in his office, located off Creek Drive. All told, he penned more than sixty books, under eleven pseudonyms, including a series very loosely based on the *M\*A\*S\*H* television show before turning to military and detective fiction.



*W.E.B. Griffin.* Courtesy of Samford University,  
Special Collection

Winston Groom (1943-2020) grew up in Mobile and served in the U.S. Army, including a tour of duty in Vietnam. In 1985, he moved back to Mobile and, shortly after the publication of *Forest Gump*, then to the Eastern Shore. Although famous for *Gump*, Groom wrote both fiction and nonfiction and is a member of the Alabama

Writers Hall of Fame. He is honored in Fairhope with a plaque embedded in the sidewalk at Page and Palette.

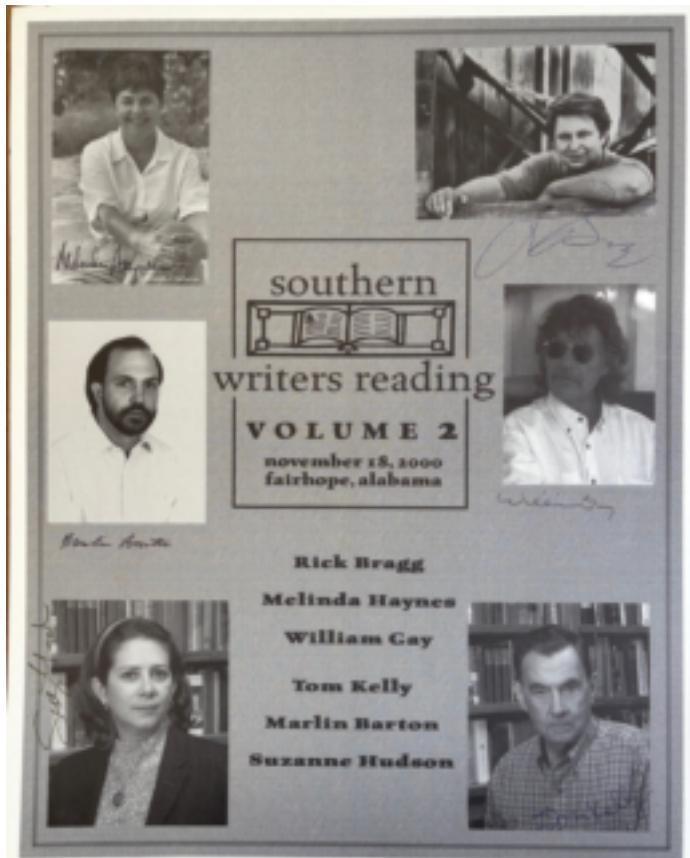


*Winston Groom at his home in Point Clear.* Courtesy of Alabama Department of Archives and History. Donated by Alabama Media Group. JoAnn Collins, Mobile Press-Register.

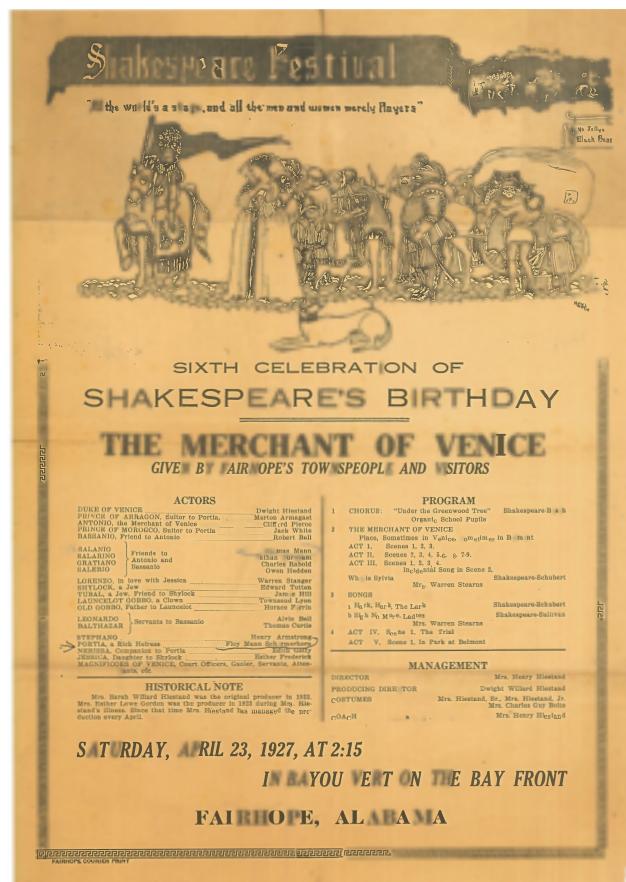
Singer, songwriter, guitarist and pop culture icon Jimmy Buffett (1946-2023) spent more time on Mobile Bay than he did on land. He lived here for a spell and had many friends along the Eastern Shore. After launching Margaritaville, a tropical party that never ends, he started writing books. He's one of just a dozen writers to have a number one *New York Times* bestseller in both fiction, with *Where is Joe Merchant* and *A Salty Piece of Land*, and nonfiction, with *A Pirate Looks at Fifty*.

By the 1990s, another enclave of creatives lived on Waterhole Branch, a tributary to Fish River. Ronald Everett Capps, along with Suzanne Hudson, author of literary novels *In a Temple of Trees* and *In the Dark of the Moon*, and Joe Formichella (now married to Suzanne) raised families and write books. *Off Magazine Street* was released to critical acclaim in 1994, and in 2004, it became the movie *Love Song for Bobby Long*, starring John Travolta. The title track was written and performed by the novelist's son, Grayson Capp, who is one of the most talented and hard-working musicians on the Gulf Coast. Joe Formichella is an award-winning author of, among others, *Waffle House Rules* and *Here's to You, Jackie Robinson*, which captures the history of the Pritchard Mohawks of the Negro Leagues.

Judith Richards (1942-2023) and C. Terry Cline (1935-2013), Fairhope's literary love story, were married fiction writers. Richards was the author of the bestselling coming-of-age novel *Summer Lightning*, based on Cline's boyhood. Her "other half" wrote horror and suspense, including *Damon and Prey*. The two were regulars for many years at Julwin's Restaurant. The scene is remembered with a painting inside Latte Da, Page and Palette's cafe.



Poster promoting Southern Writers Reading, Volume 2.  
Courtesy of Alam Samry



Shakespeare Playbill, Courtesy Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, Mann Collection

Novelist, poet, editor, literary magazine publisher, Over the Transom bookstore owner, and general coraller of southern writers, Sonny Brewer makes the local literary world turn. In 2013, Joe Formichella remembered, "When the writing community started to come out of the woodwork here in Fairhope ... mostly with Sonny Brewer's pushing, we started doing Southern Writers Reading, and then we started doing anthologies, 'The Blue Moon Café,' and then Sonny had his bookstore downtown, Over the Transom, where they had weekly readings." The readings turned out to be a community event and a who's who of southern writers, including local lights mentioned above, as well as William Gay, Beth Ann Fennelly, Tom Franklin, Mark Childress, Brad Watson, and Sidney Thompson.

Meantime, Brewer's longtime friend, confidante, and landlord Suzanne Hudson won the Truman Capote Prize for her short fiction, including collections like *Opposable Thumbs* and *All the Way to Memphis*. Brewer held a party at Theatre 98 and filled the old church with writers, artists, and booklovers.

The Fairhope Center for the Writing Arts, "Wolff Cottage" (named in honor of Page and Palette owner Betty Jo), offers writers a quaint downtown residence in which authors can pursue their work. The brainchild of Sonny Brewer and others, the group recruited Rick Bragg to be the first Writer in Residence in 2003. As Bragg, a Pulitzer Prize winner penned, "You can't swing a dead cat in Fairhope without hitting a writer." He lived here full time for a spell and still has a second home in Fairhope. Over the last twenty years, more than one hundred writers from around the United States, Canada, and Ukraine have spent a few weeks or up to three months honing their craft in the cottage. A few cottage stayers, including Louise Mason and Julie Cantrell, loved the area so much they moved here.

Just down Scenic 98 past the Grand Hotel is the home, and on the same lot, the former one-room Point Clear Library, of Watt Key. Key's 2006 coming of age novel *Alabama Moon* became a 2009 motion picture starring John Goodman.

In the early aughts, Fairhope was home to three of the best journalists in Alabama. John Sledge, Roy Hoffman, and Ben Raines all wrote for the *Mobile Press Register*. Sledge was the editor and columnist for the paper's beloved book page. His books include *The Gulf of Mexico*, *The Mobile River*, and *Southern Bound*, a collection of his columns. Hoffman, a Mobile native and Lillian Smith Award winner, told wonderful human-interest stories and proffered profiles of folks with local color. His novels include *Chicken Dreaming Corn* and

*The Promise of the Pelican* along with nonfiction titles *Coming Home* and *Alabama Afternoons*. Raines was the environmental reporter who has gone on to author and photograph *America's Amazon* and *The Last Slave Ship: The True Story of How the Clotilda was Found*. He is an Environmental Writer-in-Residence at the University of South Alabama. All three continue to call Fairhope home.

Brewer's *The Poet of Tolstoy Park* tells a fictionalized version of "Ye Olde Weaver" Henry Stuart, a man who thought he wasn't going to live long, moved from Idaho to Montrose and built his roundhouse. It still stands, though thanks to a successful public campaign, is to be moved from its current site in a parking lot to a new home "back in the woods" in the Flying Creek Nature Preserve. Brewer, having lived in it while writing the novel, spearheaded the effort to save the "Hermit Hut" and is planning a parade to celebrate. When the roundhouse rolls over the Fly Creek bridge, it'll be a second line celebrating the Eastern Shore's literary arts story.

Alan Samry is the author of *Mapping Fairhope: Legends, Locals, & Landmarks* and co-author of *Fairhope (Past and Present)*.

*Cover Art for Stories from the Blue Moon Café story collection. Courtesy of Alan Samry*



(Left to right) Sonny Brewer (and dog, Bobby), Grayson Capps, and Suzanne Hudson at the community celebration for Hudson's Truman Capote Award, Theatre 98, March 2025. Photo by Joe Formichella

## PRE-MEETING OPTIONS



### BALDWIN COUNTY TRAINING SCHOOL

100 Main Street, Daphne

In 1889, the Eastern Shore Missionary Baptist Association purchased a ten-acre plot and built a two-room private school, the Eastern Shore Baptist Academy for Negroes. Supporters of the school later constructed an addition to the school with support from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. In 1915, the Baldwin County Board of Education received title to the land and the school was named the Eastern Shore Industrial School for grades one through nine. In 1927, the name was changed to Baldwin County Training School, educating grades one through twelve, the only Black high school in the county. The building now operates as the Daphne Black Education Museum, preserving and interpreting the important story of Black education during segregation. The museum will be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursday, April 9.

*Photo courtesy of Vickie Graham*

### DAPHNE HISTORY MUSEUM

405 Dryer Avenue

The Daphne History Museum is housed in the historic Methodist Church building, constructed in 1858. The structure features a slave gallery and an adjoining cemetery, where the oldest marked grave dates back to 1847. Designated as a museum in 2001, the building now serves to preserve and share the rich history of the Jubilee City and its surrounding communities. Visitors can explore Native American artifacts dating back to before European arrival, learn about the unique local phenomenon known as the Jubilee, and discover Daphne's time as the county seat.

Exhibits highlight the area's early settlers and businesses, the Bay Boats that once transported people and goods across Mobile Bay, and the stories of Italian immigration that helped shape the region. The museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on April 9.

*Photo courtesy of Rachel Burt*



### DOUGLASVILLE HIGH SCHOOL HERITAGE MUSEUM

1000 Shedrick Hardy Parkway  
Bay Minette, Alabama

Stephen J. Boykin was dedicated to improving educational opportunities for African American students, and, in 1899, he founded the Normal School in Douglasville, a Bay Minette community, making it the first school for Black students in Baldwin County. Douglasville High School operated from 1949 to 1970, when students began attending Baldwin County High School. A historic marker for Boykin tells the story of Black education in the county, including his self-published newspaper, *The American Banner*, which ran from 1899-1902. The Heritage Museum is located in the first permanent structure of the former Douglasville High School. The museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. for visitors on Thursday, April 9.



### GUIDED TOUR OF FAIRHOPE STORYBOOK CASTLES

Sign up in advance for one of two 90-minute guided tours of Fairhope Storybook Castles with owners Pagan Sheldon Mosher and Dean Mosher on Thursday, April 9. Craig T. Sheldon built the first castle in 1946 from recycled materials, and award-winning artist Dean Mosher (friend and son-in-law of Craig) used Sheldon Castle as inspiration for the one built for himself and Pagan. The guided tour includes the interior of Mosher Castle, and visitors will see firsthand why the homes are known as the most magical and artistic places in Alabama. Learn more and see photos of the castles at [www.fairhopecastle.com](http://www.fairhopecastle.com). Guided tours are \$10 per person and will begin promptly at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 9. Space is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

### Panel on Writing and Publishing Local History Followed by Reception

The 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting will begin with a panel discussion on “Writing and Publishing Local History” on **Thursday, April 9, at 5:00 p.m.** in the Fairhope Public Library Auditorium. Panelists include (left to right):

- **Mike Bunn**, Director, Historic Blakeley State Park, author of several histories, including *The Tensaw River*.
- **Gabriel Gold-Vukson**, Director, Fairhope Museum of History, co-author of *Fairhope (Past and Present)*
- **Alan Samry**, writer, author of *Mapping Fairhope: Legends, Locals, & Landmarks* and co-author, *Fairhope (Past and Present)*
- **John Sledge**, historian-in-residence, National Maritime Museum, author of several histories, including *The Mobile River*.

The meeting’s opening reception will begin at 6:00 p.m. at Coastal Alabama Community College, directly across the street from the Fairhope Public Library.



## FAIRHOPE COLONY CEMETERY

*North Church Street and Oak Avenue*

The founders of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation established the Fairhope Colony Cemetery around 1895 to provide burial spaces for members and lessees of the corporation. According to the historic marker, the first death in the colony was recorded on July 4, 1895, when Mr. John Hunnell of Green County, Pennsylvania, was found, in the early morning by a fisherman, face down in the water on the edge of Mobile Bay where he had gone to bathe. Later on the same day, friends organized a picnic, made a coffin from the boards of picnic tables, and laid Mr. Hunnell to rest at sundown.



## FAIRHOPE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

*9261 Fairhope Avenue*

The Fairhope Friends Meeting House has served the Quaker community in the greater Fairhope area for over 100 years. Originally built in the style of a one-room schoolhouse in 1916, the meeting house served both educational and worship purposes for a quickly growing Fairhope Quaker public.

Following political unrest in the wake of the Selective Service Act of 1948, the meeting house even offered space for an active young people's Discussion Group, which helped the wider Fairhope community to sort out deep personal and spiritual issues, both contemporary and those reaching back into the history of the Friends in England established in the mid-1600s. [www.fairhopefriends.org](http://www.fairhopefriends.org)

*Photo courtesy of Fairhope Friends*



### FAIRHOPE HOTEL/SUMMIT STREET INN

131 Fairhope Avenue

In 1925, Marmaduke Dyson built what Fairhope locals called the “new Fairhope Hotel,” a welcoming retreat for winter guests near Mobile Bay. Captain and Mrs. Jack Cross dreamed of creating “a homey place to spend the winter,” and their vision thrived for decades. Ownership changed hands—Dr. W.C. Mason turned it into a private home, and later the Milham family revived its hotel spirit as The Yardarm Guesthouse, marked by its cast-iron anchor. By the 1990s, it became offices, quietly holding its history within. In 2021, Fairhope broker Shelley Springer brought the inn back to life, renaming it Summit Street Inn and restoring its boutique charm. Listed on national and state historic registers, it stands as Fairhope’s first tax-credit renovation. Today, steps from downtown and Mobile Bay, the inn celebrates 100 years of hospitality, blending timeless elegance with modern comfort for generations to come.

*Photo courtesy of Shelley Springer*



### FAIRHOPE MUSEUM OF HISTORY

24 N. Section Street

The Fairhope Museum of History is located in the heart of downtown Fairhope and occupies the historic circa 1928 Spanish mission-style building which once served as City Hall. The museum features permanent exhibits of Fairhope’s unique history including Fairhope’s founders, the Single Tax theory, the town jail, the Jubilee phenomenon and many other interesting displays. The mezzanine gallery has been used for large changing exhibits such as Civil War in Baldwin County, Stewart the Picture Man, History of Pottery on the Eastern Shore, Fairhopians who fought in WWII and the Bay Boat years on Mobile Bay.

*Photos courtesy of Fairhope Museum of History*



## FAIRHOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

155 S. Section Street

Fairhope United Methodist Church was chartered in December, 1910, with twelve members and met for three years in the “Bell Building” at the Organic School of Education. In 1913, the church built its first sanctuary across the street from the current location where Redeemer Lutheran Church now stands. Hurricanes of 1916 and 1923 destroyed the church’s buildings, but each time the church rebuilt. In 1946, the church moved to its current location and occupied the old Sadler home. The present sanctuary was built in 1949-50.



## MARIETTA JOHNSON MUSEUM

*Coastal Alabama Community College Campus*

Education reformer Marietta Johnson (1864-1938) founded the School of Organic Education in Fairhope in 1907, and the progressive experimental school earned international fame for its unique philosophy and educational practice. The museum is located in the original schoolhouse on what is now the Fairhope campus of Coastal Alabama Community College, near where the annual meeting sessions will take place. A memorial sculpture of Marietta Johnson and two schoolchildren is located on the walking path near the Fairhope Pier.

*Photo courtesy of Coastal Alabama Community College*

## FRIDAY TOURS



### TOLSTOY PARK AND THE HENRY STUART ROUND HOUSE

(We will provide location at meeting.)

Henry Stuart (1858-1946) moved to Montrose from Idaho in 1923 for health reasons, and he constructed the Round House in 1925 and 1926 from blocks he made himself. The small, domed concrete building is the only surviving portion of the ten acres Mr. Stuart bought and named Tolstoy Park in honor of the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy. Local author Sonny Brewer fictionalized Stuart's life in the popular novel *The Poet of Tolstoy Park*, and Brewer will provide the 2026 Awards Banquet keynote address on Henry Stuart, one of Fairhope's most unique residents. Read about Henry Stuart and the plans to move the historic structure to nearby Flying Creek Nature Preserve at [www.tolstoypark.com](http://www.tolstoypark.com).

*Photo courtesy of Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Archives*

### Post-Meeting Opportunity to Visit Site of the Wreck of the *Clotilda*

AHA Board Member Mike Bunn, director of the Historic Blakeley State Park, will coordinate a special opportunity for AHA members to travel by boat from the park to the site of the wreck of the *Clotilda*, the last-known ship to bring enslaved West Africans into the United States. The *Clotilda*, sunk in 1860 and rediscovered in 2019, rests in the waters of the Mobile River north of the city. Registration in advance is required, and space is limited. The boat will depart at 2:30 p.m. and return to the dock by 4:45 p.m. Please arrive at the dock by 2:15 p.m.

*Photo courtesy of Historic Blakeley State Park*

*Cost: \$27*

*To Purchase Tickets: [aub.ie/clotilda](http://aub.ie/clotilda)*

*Park Address: 34745 State Hwy 225, Spanish Fort, Alabama (30 minutes from Fairhope)*

*Park Number: 251-626-0798*

*Tickets not purchased by AHA members will go on sale to the public on March 15.*



# 78<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

### THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2026

#### Pre-meeting Options

- **Baldwin County Training School**
- **Daphne History Museum** (Open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)
- **Douglasville High School Museum** (Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.)
- **Fairhope Storybook Castles Guided Tour** (1 p.m. and 3 p.m., pre-registration and fee required)

**5:00 p.m.**      **Panel on Writing and Publishing Local History**  
Fairhope Public Library Auditorium

**6 – 8:00 p.m.**    **Reception**  
Coastal Alabama Community College  
(Across the street from public library)

### FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2026

**8:00 a.m.**      **Registration, Coffee, Book Sales**  
Dahlgren Hall

**9:00 a.m.**      **General Session**

**10:45 a.m.**    **Concurrent Sessions**

**Session A: Ben H. Severance, Auburn University at Montgomery, presiding**

- “‘Waiting a Long Time for Their Time to Come’: Impressment and Freedom in Wartime Mobile”  
*Lesley J. Gordon, University of Alabama*
- “Armed and Starving: Soldiers’ Wives in Confederate Mobile”  
*Robin Long, St. Edward’s University*
- “‘Little worse than a den of rattle snakes’: Finding Camp Watts, Alabama’s Civil War Camp of Instruction #1”  
*Meghan E. Buchanan, Auburn University and LisaMarie Malischke, Auburn University at Montgomery*

**Session B: David Messenger, University of South Alabama, presiding**

- “Ku Klux Klan Activity in 1920s Guntersville and Gadsden: A Case Study on the Persecution of Immigrants”  
*Whitney A. Snow, Midwestern State University*
- “Alabamians in Israel: A 1968 Trip and the Search for Usable Models of Agricultural Cooperatives”  
*Ansley L. Quiros, University of North Alabama*
- “The Longest Active Friends Community in Alabama: The Legacy of Quakers in Fairhope”  
*Carol P. Motley, Fairhope Friends Meeting and Catherine P. King, Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Archives*

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS *Continued*

### Session C: Mike Bunn, Historic Blakeley State Park, presiding

- “From Slavery to Sovereignty: Celebrating the Legacy of Dr. William Hooper Council and 150 Years of Alabama A&M University (1875–2025)”  
*Eddie Davis, Jr., Black Heritage Council*
- “Yellow Dog Republican: Gadsden, Alabama’s Lonnie Noojin and His Fight to Establish the Republican Party in the Solid South”  
*Cody D. Robinson, Gadsden*
- “The Lamars: Prominent Alabama Settlers, Old Ideas, New Questions”  
*Jay Lamar and Shari L. Williams, Auburn*

**12:00 p.m.** **Box Lunches Served**

**1 to 4 p.m.** **Tours On-Your-Own**

- Colony Cemetery
- Fairhope Friends Meeting House
- Fairhope Hotel/Summit Street Inn
- Fairhope Museum of History (open until 5 p.m.)
- Fairhope United Methodist Church
- Marietta Johnson Museum
- Tolstoy Park/Henry Stuart Round House

**7:00 p.m.** **Awards Banquet – Fairhope United Methodist Church**

*Keynote address by Sonny Brewer, author of The Poet of Tolstoy Park*

## SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026

**8:30 a.m.** **Concurrent Sessions**

### Session A: Valerie Pope Burnes, University of West Alabama, presiding

- “Dumb Southerners: How Disease Skewed Perceptions of the South”  
*Beth Hunter, University of Alabama at Birmingham*
- “We Come By It (Dis)Honestly: Panaceas, Poisons, and Prescriptions in an Early-20th Century Pharmacy”  
*Caity Bell, Landmarks of DeKalb County*
- “The Poisoning of John T. Rowland and the Enforcement of Temperance in Small Southern Communities”  
*Wesley R. Bishop, Jacksonville State University*

### Session B: Carrie Barske Crawford, University of North Alabama, presiding

- “Victor von Sheliha’s Torpedoes and the Confederate Defense of Mobile Bay”  
*Paul T. Brueske, University of South Alabama*
- “‘The Principles of Civil Defense are Not New to Rural People’: Alabama’s Rural Civil Defense Program During the Cold War”  
*Hector L. Montford, College of Coastal Georgia*
- “Huntsville’s 1971 Sanitation Workers Strike”  
*Adam Keller and Whitney R. Washington, North Alabama Area Labor Council*

**Session C: Kelly Kennington, Auburn University, presiding**

- “The 1865 University of Alabama Fire: Archival Loss, Enduring Myths, and Historical Memory”  
*Rebecca L. Whiting, University of Alabama*
- “*The House That Hate Built*: Novel Facts and Factual History”  
*Bert Hitchcock, Opelika*
- “Two Historical Myths from the Shoals: Pope’s Tavern Museum and the Singing River”  
*Brian Murphy and Jordan Collier, Florence Arts and Museums*

**10:00 a.m. Business Session**

**10:45 a.m. Concurrent Sessions**

**Session A: John M. Giggie, University of Alabama, presiding**

- “Conservative or Progressive? The Political Culture of Tuskegee Institute”  
*S. Thomas Ritchie, Tuskegee University*
- “‘Do What the Spirit Say Do’: A Photo Essay on the Activism, Advocacy, and Outreach of the Tuskegee Institute Scholar-Activists in the 1960s”  
*Thomas L. Coley, Alabama Education Association*
- “Resilience and Recognition: The MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians in Alabama”  
*Peter Rivers, Mobile*

**Session B: Theo Moore, Hiztorical Vision Productions, presiding**

- “Trading for Victory: Reexamining the Anglo-French Trade War in the Colonial Alabama Frontier”  
*John J. Gurner, Fort Toulouse-Fort Jackson Park*
- “How Urban Renewal Reshaped a Mobile Neighborhood”  
*Christine Q. Dawson, GAI Consultants*
- “Collective Memory, Pride, and Place: Documenting the African American Neighborhoods of Florence, Alabama”  
*Michael Asher, Florence Arts and Museums*

**Session C: Susan Reynolds, Alabama Heritage, presiding**

- “Fairhope and Philadelphia’s Single-Tax Connection”  
*Maureen S. Thompson, Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System*
- “*Negro Folk Music of Alabama*, Folkways Records, and Harold Courlander”  
*James I. Deutsch, Smithsonian Institution*
- “Lives Before Loss: How the Army and War Forever Changed the Communities of Pond Beat and Mullins Flat and the People Who Built Them”  
*Polly Padden, Mississippi State University*

**12:15 p.m. Luncheon -- Fairhope United Methodist Church**

*Presidential Address, Dr. Matthew Downs*

**2:30 p.m. Post-Meeting Opportunity to Visit Site of the Wreck of the Clotilda**

**• Historic Blakeley State Park**

*NOTE: Tickets required separately and in advance. See page 16 for details.*

- 1 Meeting:  
**Coastal Alabama Community College** 450 Fairhope Avenue
- 2 Banquet & Lunch:  
**Fairhope United Methodist Church** 155 S. Section Street

## Hotels:

- 1 **Hampton Inn Fairhope**  
23 N. Section Street • 251-928-0956  
Visit [hilton.com](http://hilton.com) - \$150/night: enter group code AHA under "Special Rates." Space is limited.
- 2 **Holiday Inn Express**  
19751 Greeno Road • 251-928-9191  
Visit [alabamahistory.net/meetings](http://alabamahistory.net/meetings) for link. \$139/night. Book by March 12.

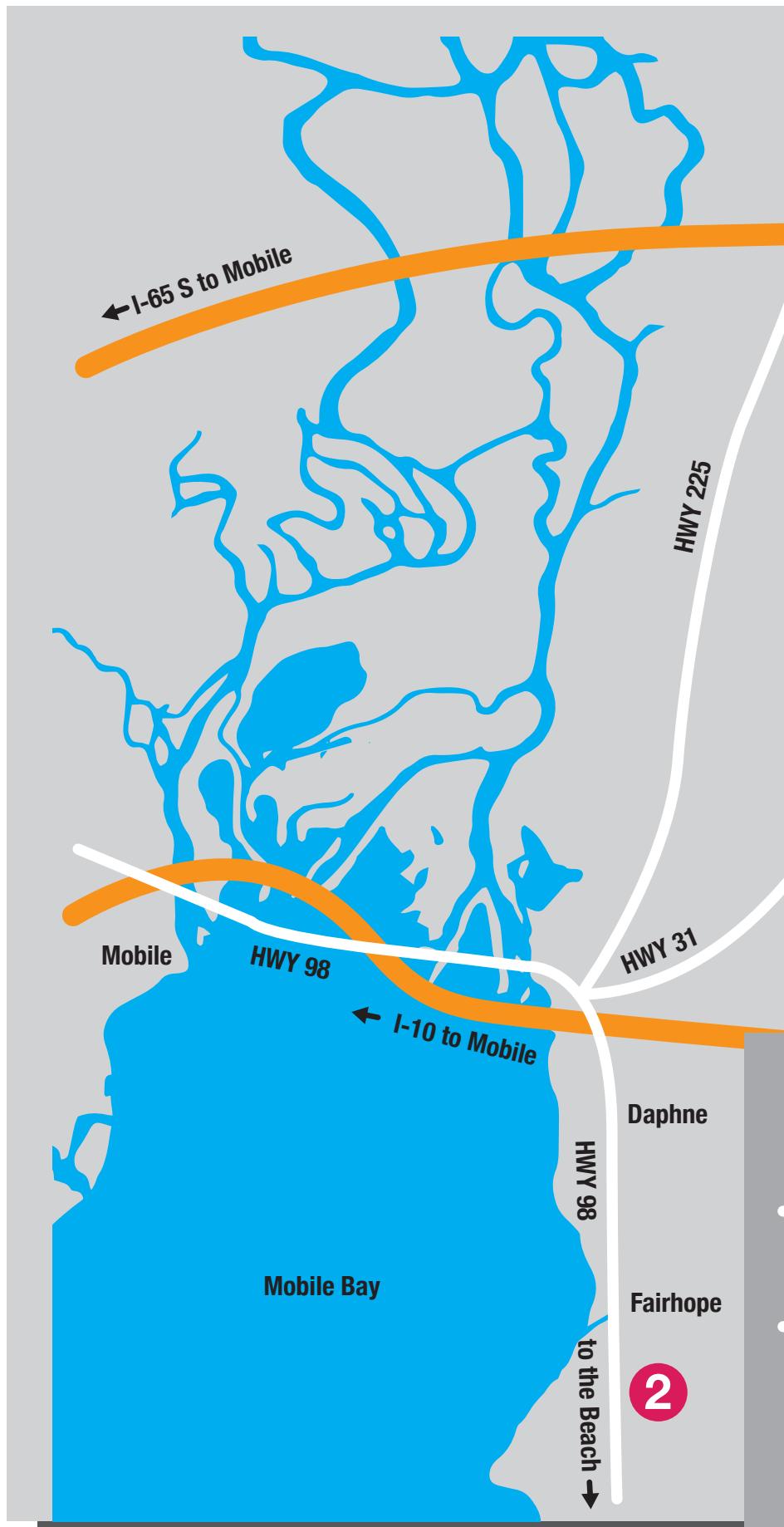
## Thursday, April 9th:

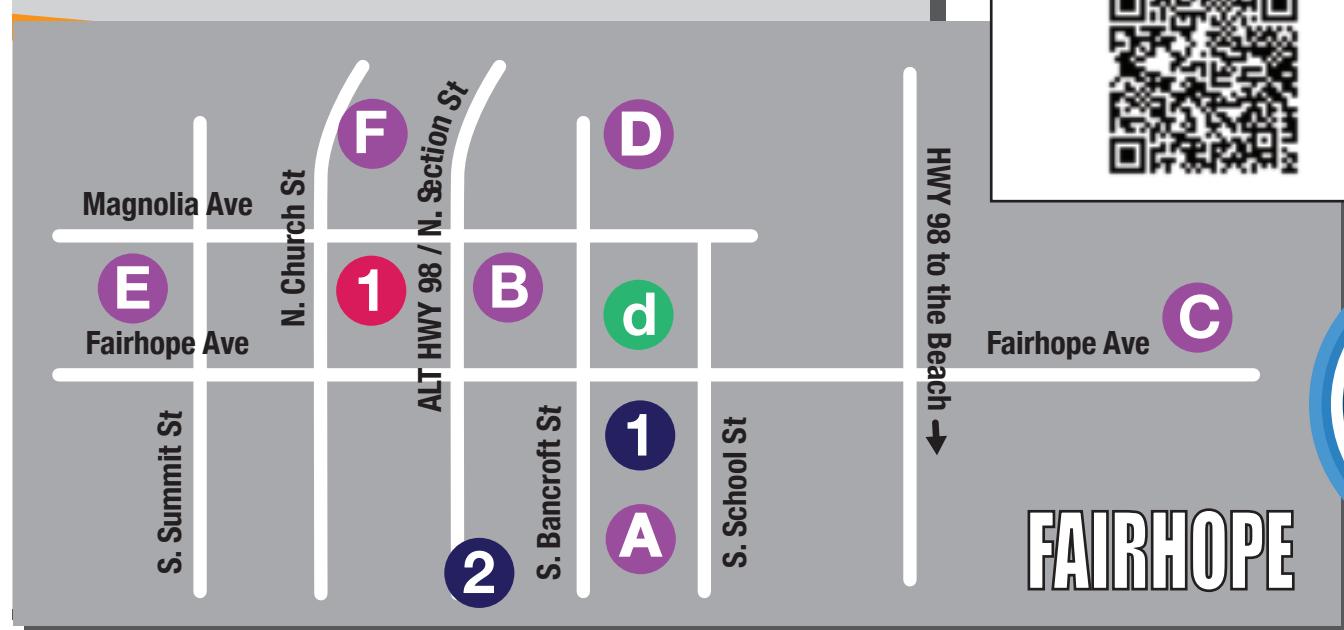
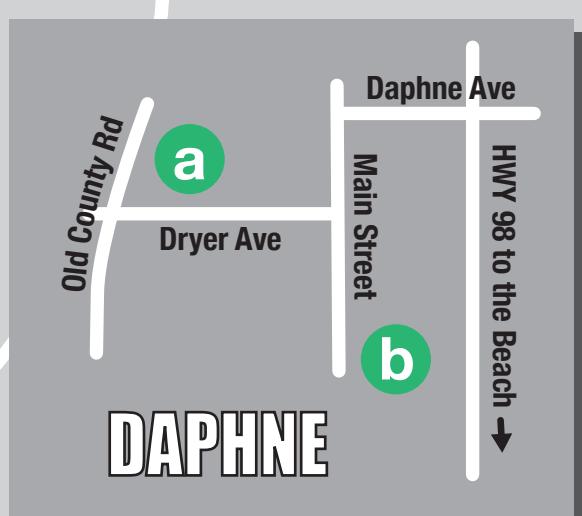
- a **Daphne History Museum**  
405 Dryer Avenue, Daphne  
Open 10am-4pm
- b **Baldwin County Training School Museum**  
1000 Main Street, Daphne  
Open 11am-3pm
- c **Douglasville High School Heritage Museum**  
1000 Shadrack Hardy Pkwy, Bay Minette  
Open 10am-1pm
- d **Fairhope Public Library**  
501 Fairhope Avenue  
5pm Panel: "Writing and Publishing Local History"



Be on the lookout for the red and white AHA signs!

Special thanks to Laura Murray for map design.





**Friday, April 10th:**  
1:00pm-4:00pm Tours on your own

- A** Marietta Johnson Museum  
10 S. School Street
- B** Fairhope Museum of History 24 N. Section Street
- 2** Fairhope United Methodist Church 155 S. Section Street
- C** Fairhope Friends Meeting House 9261 Fairhope Avenue
- D** Mosher Storybook Castle 457 Oak Avenue (Exterior only on Fri)
- E** Fairhope Hotel/Summit Street Inn 131 Fairhope Avenue
- F** Colony Cemetery Corner of North Church Street & Oak Avenue

Scan this QR code for access to the Google Map.



Please don't rely on the scale of this map for navigation.



## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### OPENING SESSION KEYNOTE

*Fairhope's African  
American History and  
Heritage* ►



**Shawn D. Graham**, Hope Community, Founding Member & Former President



**Mara Kozelsky**,  
University of South  
Alabama, Professor of  
History



**Vickie Graham**, Hope Community, Board of Directors



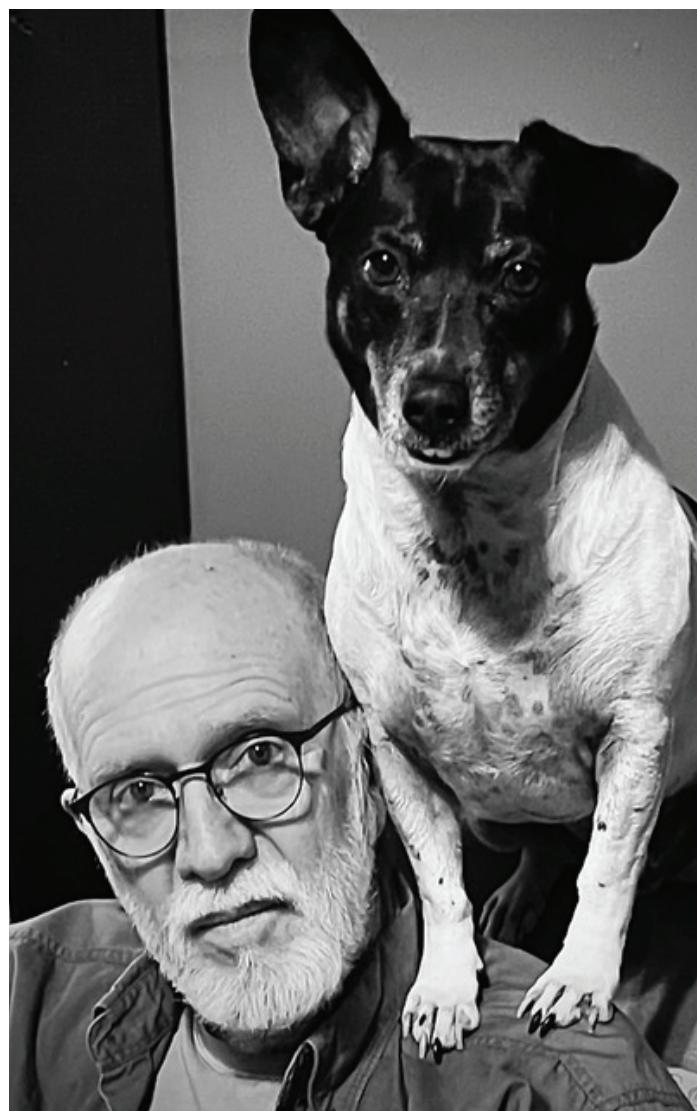
**Clarice Hall-Black**, Hope Community, Secretary



**Clayton Vaughn-  
Roberson**, University of  
South Alabama, Assistant  
Professor of History

### AWARDS BANQUET KEYNOTE:

**Sonny Brewer** is the author of five novels, among them *The Poet of Tolstoy Park*, based on the true-life story of Henry James Stuart who came from Idaho to Fairhope, Alabama, in 1923 with a year to live. He did not follow his doctor's prognosis, however, and lived another 20 years in a round house of hand-poured concrete blocks. Sonny has adapted that novel into a stage play that he hopes to produce annually in Fairhope. Sonny also published five short story anthologies of Southern writers, called *Stories from the Blue Moon Cafe*. His other books include a collection of haiku poems, a children's book, a Clarence Darrow biography, and a self-help book on creativity. He lives in Fairhope with his little dog Bobby. ▼





Staffers of the civil and economic rights newspaper The Southern Courier returned to dedicate a marker at the site of their former office in downtown Montgomery, July 2025. Photo courtesy of Scotty Kirkland ▲



AHA member George Adair stands next to a new marker about the Bryce Coal Mine Disaster in Tuscaloosa. Dedicated in September 2025, this was the Association's final History Revealed marker, a five-year project to erect markers on lesser-known topics. Photo courtesy of Scotty Kirkland ◀

Students from Percy Julian High School sing during a marker dedication for the school's namesake, scientist and humanitarian Percy Julian in Montgomery, April 2025. Photo courtesy of Scotty Kirkland ▼



## ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION HISTORICAL MARKERS IN 2025

*Text and locations of the markers ordered by the Association in 2025 will appear in a forthcoming issue of The Alabama Review. Markers below followed by an asterisk have been installed.*

- Barbara H. Patton Southside Center for the Arts\*
- Bell's Landing / Tinela & Hybert (Monroe County)
- Hall-Kent School (Jefferson County)
- Homer Jack Daughtry & the Fight for Native Education (Escambia County)
- Jackson House (Lawrence County)
- Locust Hill (Colbert County)
- North Highland High School (Autauga County) \*
- North Highland Park (Autauga County) \*
- Original Site of the University of Alabama in Huntsville (Madison County) \*
- Prentice High School (Shelby County) \*
- Sallie Mae Hadnott (Autauga County)
- *The Southern Courier* (Montgomery County) \*
- The Todd Road Incident & the Origins of Leadership Montgomery, Inc. (Montgomery County)



Big Hurricane Cemetery, courtesy of John Scott



HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION  
c/o Caroline Marshall  
Draughon Center for the  
Arts & Humanities  
Pebble Hill  
Auburn, AL 36849  
[www.alabamahistory.net](http://www.alabamahistory.net)

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Montgomery, AL  
Permit No. 456

# SAVE THE DATE!

**Fall Pilgrimage  
October 23-24, 2026  
Jasper, Alabama**

Visit [www.alabamahistory.net](http://www.alabamahistory.net) for hotel room blocks and more information.

Photo courtesy of Jasper Main Street



# Alabama Historical Association

## Annual Meeting — April 9-11, 2026

### REGISTRATION FORM

#### FULL REGISTRATION:

\$175 per person **AHA Full Registration**  
*Includes Thursday reception, Friday lunch, Friday banquet, Saturday luncheon, and sessions.*

#### SINGLE DAY REGISTRATION OPTIONS:

\$40 per person **Thursday Night Reception**  
*Includes Thursday reception only.*

\$40 per person **Friday Lunch**  
*Includes Friday lunch, sessions, and Friday tours.*

\$75 per person **Friday Awards Banquet**  
*Includes Friday awards banquet only.*

\$60 per person **Saturday Luncheon**  
*Includes Saturday luncheon and sessions.*

#### ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

\$10 per person **Fairhope Storybook Castles Tour**  
Please select preferred tour time:  1:00 p.m.  3:00 p.m.

\$27 per person **Cruise to the Site of the Clotilda Wreck**  
*You must register for this SEPARATELY. Visit aub.ie/clotilda to purchase a ticket. The cruise departs from the Historic Blakeley State Park dock at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday.*

#### CHOOSE TO DO MORE:

*Make an additional tax-deductible contribution in support of the AHA.*

\$\_\_\_\_\_ To support programs, including the Speakers Bureau and History Revealed marker program

\$\_\_\_\_\_ To support scholarships for college students to attend the annual meeting

**TOTAL =**

Make checks payable to Alabama Historical Association and mail to AHA, Pebble Hill, Auburn, AL 36849. **Pre-registrations must be received by Monday, March 30.**

You may also register online at [aub.ie/AHAAAnnualMeeting](http://aub.ie/AHAAAnnualMeeting).

— continue on reverse —

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION:

Name of Person Making Payment

Mailing Address

City, State, Zip Code

Telephone and Email

## PRINT INFORMATION FOR NAME TAGS:

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_ City or Institutional Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_ City or Institutional Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_ City or Institutional Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

First: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_ City or Institutional Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

*To help ensure accurate space and numbers, please indicate your anticipated attendance for the following:*

**Total # of Attendees**

Thursday Evening Reception      Yes      No      \_\_\_\_\_

Friday Lunch      Yes      No      \_\_\_\_\_

Friday Banquet      Yes      No      \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Luncheon      Yes      No      \_\_\_\_\_

For more information or questions, contact one of the following AHA officers:

Gayle Thomas, Treasurer

ronthomas\_ups@yahoo.com

334-790-0815

Mark Wilson, Secretary

mwilson@auburn.edu

334-844-6198

Maiben Beard, Membership Secretary

maiben@auburn.edu

334-844-4903