

A Nation of Historic Communities



A Presentation on History and Heritage of Communities Across the United States

Presented by the Cahaba Homestead Heritage Foundation

History & Heritage

- The purpose of this presentation is to visit many historic communities across the United States and hear from members of those communities.
- These communities, like Trussville's Cahaba Project, are of great historical significance, several of which were developed during the same time in the late 1930s.



Greendale, Wisconsin

- Like the Cahaba Project, Greendale was developed in 1936 as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The project included 3,400 acres of farmland southwest of Milwaukee.
- Greendale was one of three "Green" communities the Resettlement Administration developed. More about Greendale is available on the Greendale Historical Society's website [here](#).

"It was very family-like in Greendale. Everybody knew everybody else. We were just coming out of the Depression. No one had any money. But we had a lot of friends. And a lot of good times."

-Eleanor Hauswirth, from *From Greendale Remembers*



A Greendale historical marker

Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Markers

Greenbelt, Maryland

- Greenbelt was an experimental cooperative community created in 1937 by the New Deal.
- The Greenbelt Museum was founded and opened in 1987 on the city's 50th anniversary. The museum is now owned and operated by the City of Greenbelt, while being supported by the Friends of the Greenbelt Museum, a nonprofit 501c3 organization. More about the museum can be found [here](#).

“The museum helps people understand that they are making a choice to live in an historic community. It helps them understand why they should be good stewards for the homes that they’re living in. It gives them that background of understanding.”

-Greenbelt Museum Director Megan Searing Young



The Greenbelt community
Photo courtesy of greenbeltmuseum.org

Greenhills, Ohio

- Greenhills is a New Deal community developed 15 miles north of Cincinnati. It was designated as a historic district and National Historic Landmark in 2017.
- Greenhills property owners are eligible to be considered for federal grants for historic preservation and/or tax credits for rehabilitating historic commercial or rental residential buildings. More on Greenhills is available [here](#).

In 2009, 52 of the original flat-roof apartments were torn down, according to [Cincinnati.com](#).

“We have a pretty engaged community. A lot of people are proud of the village and happy to celebrate it.”

-Former Greenhills Mayor Fred Murrell to Cincinnati.com



Greenhills, Ohio, in 1939

Photo courtesy of John Vachon/Library of Congress

Opelika, Alabama

- The Heritage House was built as a single-family home in 1912-1913. After a couple owners, it was bought in 1993 by Barbara Patton and son Richard to preserve it from demolition. It remains standing today.
- Read more about Opelika's history [here](#).

“I have been a real estate agent for the last 24 years and know for a fact that properties’ values continue to rise in the (Opelika historic) district, more so with properties that have been preserved on the exterior and remodeled on the interior.”

-Lisa Thrift, City of Opelika Community Development Administrator and Historic Preservation Coordinator



The Heritage House in Opelika, Alabama
Photo courtesy of Lisa Thrift

Montevallo, Alabama

- Montevallo's Historic Preservation Commission protects and raises awareness of the valuable historic buildings in the city.
- The [Mahler House](#), a 167-acre estate Elizabeth Mahler donated to the city in 2013, has undergone a \$500,000 restoration to preserve the character of the home's exterior while renovating it, according to the [Shelby County Reporter](#).

“As a Commission, we try to point the city in a direction that helps them have projects that will help us maintain a historical presence in our city. The benefits are that it leaves historical information for the next generation coming. With Montevallo, that is one of the things that’s really great about our town. We care about history.”

-Montevallo Historic Preservation Commission Chair Joyce Jones



The house as purchased by the Mahlers in 1946

Photo courtesy of cityofmontevallo.com

Mobile, Alabama

- The Lower Dauphin Street Historic District in downtown Mobile was at one time dwindling in popularity. However, through rehabilitation efforts and the Mobile City Council designating it a local historic district, in a matter of 10 years the area was turned around. Property values increased. The downtown came alive.
- More information is available [here](#).

“The very essence of Mobile is still here. And it’s here because the landmark buildings are still here. And the feel of the city is the same. It feels like home. I think it’s the sense of place, the sense of shared history here that is so important to me. This is where I grew up with my siblings. This is where my original nuclear family existed. It’s knowing where I’m from. That’s why I want to preserve Mobile.”

-Mobile Historic Development Commission Deputy Director Christine Dawson



The Mobile Historic Development Commission

Arthurdale, West Virginia

- Arthurdale, now an unincorporated area, was the nation's first New Deal homestead subsistence project, begun in 1934, and it included 165 homes and several community buildings, including a school complex.
- The federal government, like it did in the Cahaba Project, liquidated its holdings in Arthurdale in 1947.



The E-15 Homestead home in Arthurdale, West Virginia, shown in 1998 (top) and in 2013 (bottom).

Photo courtesy of Arthurdale Heritage, Inc.

Arthurdale, West Virginia

- Thanks to Arthurdale Heritage, Inc., Arthurdale is now home to the New Deal Homestead Museum, a multi-building museum that includes a fully restored Arthurdale homestead.

“We normally hold a large New Deal Festival every July, several arts and crafts shows, which provide markets for local artisans, other fundraisers, plus many arts and crafts classes, and affordable hall rentals. Because of our close connection to Eleanor Roosevelt, we are often mentioned in books and videos, so that makes us a draw to a larger pool of people.”

-Arthurdale Heritage, Inc. Archivist Jeanne Goodman



The Arthurdale Administration Building
Photo courtesy of Arthurdale Heritage, Inc.

Tuscaloosa, Alabama

- Tuscaloosa is home to more than 20 historic districts and properties. Look at those [here](#).
- The [Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society](#) has been preserving and promoting Tuscaloosa County's historic resources since 1966. The society's mission is to develop an awareness and appreciation of the historical and cultural heritage of the community.

“The value of having these beautiful houses retained around me, I understood that and I wanted that. I definitely do (see a benefit to historic homes). It provides a good transition to the downtown area. Those neighborhoods are so beautiful.”

-City of Tuscaloosa Office of Urban Development Senior Planner
Zach Ponds



A Tuscaloosa historical marker
Photo courtesy of waymarking.com

Decatur, Alabama

- The City of Decatur, Alabama includes two major residential historic districts with 100 blocks of homes, all on the National Register of Historic Places.
More on that [here](#).
- Both historic districts, the Old Decatur and Albany historic districts, have walking/driving tours that provide insight into the city's history. Check that out [here](#).



A look at the Decatur walking tour app

Photo courtesy of cityofdecatur.com

Decatur, Alabama

- City of Decatur Director of Historic Resources David Breland, who also serves on the Historic Decatur Association, estimates that home values in the districts have increased by about 33% over the last five years.
- The photos at right, showing homes in the Old Decatur (top) and Albany (bottom) historic districts, are courtesy of decaturdowntown.org.

“It is not unusual for these homes to sell without ever being listed. It is becoming common for houses appropriately priced for their condition to sell in a few days, some in one or two days with more than one offer. They are unique, the neighborhoods have parks and nice tree-lined streets.”

-City of Decatur Director of Historic Resources David Breland

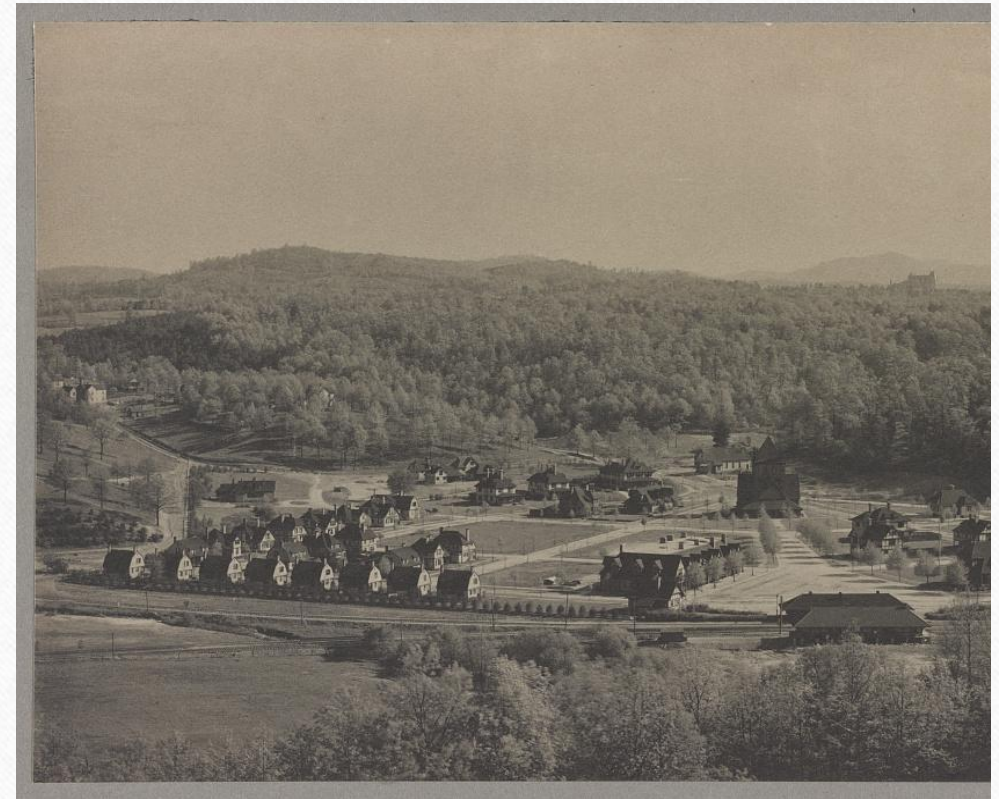


Asheville, North Carolina

- Biltmore Village in Asheville was modeled after an English village that not only acted as an entrance to George Vanderbilt's Biltmore Estate but also to function as an independent and self-sustaining community. There is currently growing support for historic districts in Asheville. Read more about the area's history [here](#).
- The history doesn't stop progress, either. In 2001 the World's Fanciest McDonald's opened in Biltmore Village, and it features a grand piano and stone fireplace, made to blend in with the timeless architecture of the village.

“Generally speaking, preservation does increase property values and creates jobs.”

-City of Asheville Urban Planner for Historic Preservation Alex Cole



Biltmore Village in Asheville, North Carolina
Photo courtesy of Library of Congress, V.G. Schreck

Penderlea Homesteads, North Carolina

- The Penderlea Homestead Farms are located in Pender County, North Carolina, and were constructed in 1934 under the New Deal.
- The Penderlea Homestead Museum started in 1998 in an administration building but was moved two years later to an original homestead structure that was restored.
- Check out the museum's website [here](http://penderleahomesteadmuseum.org).

“We take pride in the community and in supplying information. If anybody's interested, we just go all out for it.”

-Penderlea Homestead Museum Manager Beverly Rivenbark



Homes in the Penderlea Homesteads
Photos courtesy of penderleahomesteadmuseum.org

Other Communities

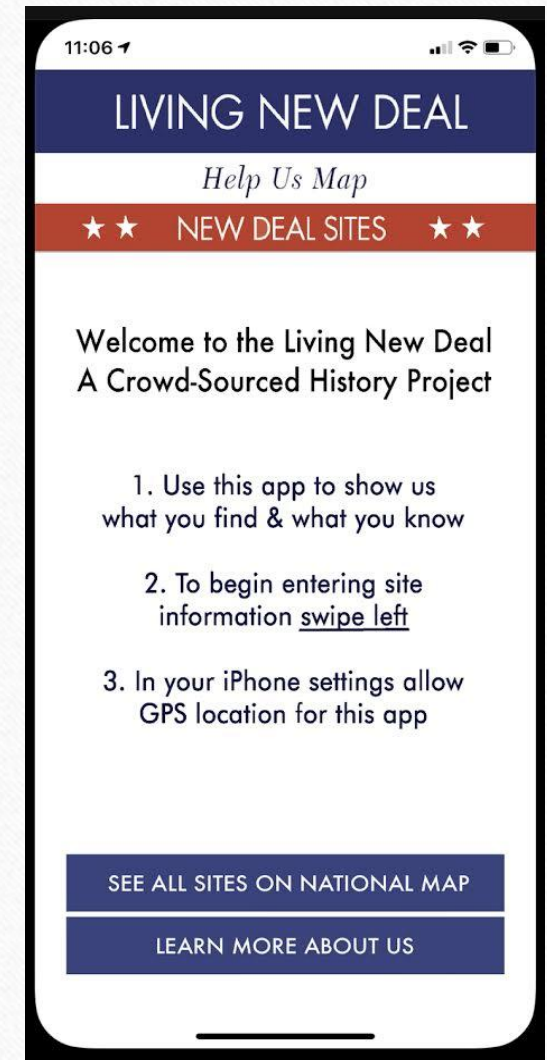
- This short presentation was just the tip of the iceberg. Historic districts exist all over the U.S. The communities detailed in the previous slides are the communities we got to know through discussions with their leaders.
 - Many more communities may be read about and researched through the various links at right.
- Check out the Phoenix, Arizona Homesteads [here](#).
 - Check out the Homewood, Alabama Historic Preservation Commission [here](#).
 - Check out the Anniston, Alabama Historic Preservation Commission [here](#).
 - Check out the Anderson, South Carolina Historic Districts [here](#).
 - Check out the Winston-Salem, North Carolina Local Historic Districts [here](#).
 - Check out the Apex, North Carolina Historical Society [here](#).
 - Check out the Raleigh, North Carolina Character Preservation Overlay Districts [here](#).
 - Check out the Fairfax, Virginia Historic Overlay Districts [here](#).

The Living New Deal

- The Living New Deal organization researches, presents and educates about the New Deal and works to disseminate its work as widely as possible through newsletters, social media, written media, interviews, lectures and other public events.
- Trussville's Cahaba Project is a Living New Deal community.

Synopsis

- The Living New Deal includes a wealth of historical information, resources, events information and news. The best part? Volunteers can submit information about various project sites. That's right. The Living New Deal, mentioned by many of the community leaders in preceding slides, contribute. The Living New Deal even has an app for iPhones. Imagine the positive exposure not only locally, but nationally, on Trussville's Cahaba Project. Imagine the intrigue to residents and tourists. The Cahaba Project should not be thought of as a neighborhood of old homes. It is a destination for heritage tourists all across the United States. It is a living legacy of the New Deal.



Conclusion

- It is apparent that history and heritage are of great importance all across the United States, and Trussville is no different.
- The Cahaba Homestead Heritage Foundation aims to support through education, outreach and civic involvement such things that promote, perpetuate and enhance the value of this community as a historic district designated on the National Register of Historic Places.



New houses being built in the Cahaba Project in February 1937

Photo courtesy of Arthur Rothstein/Library of Congress

Questions? Comments? Want to know more about us?

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