



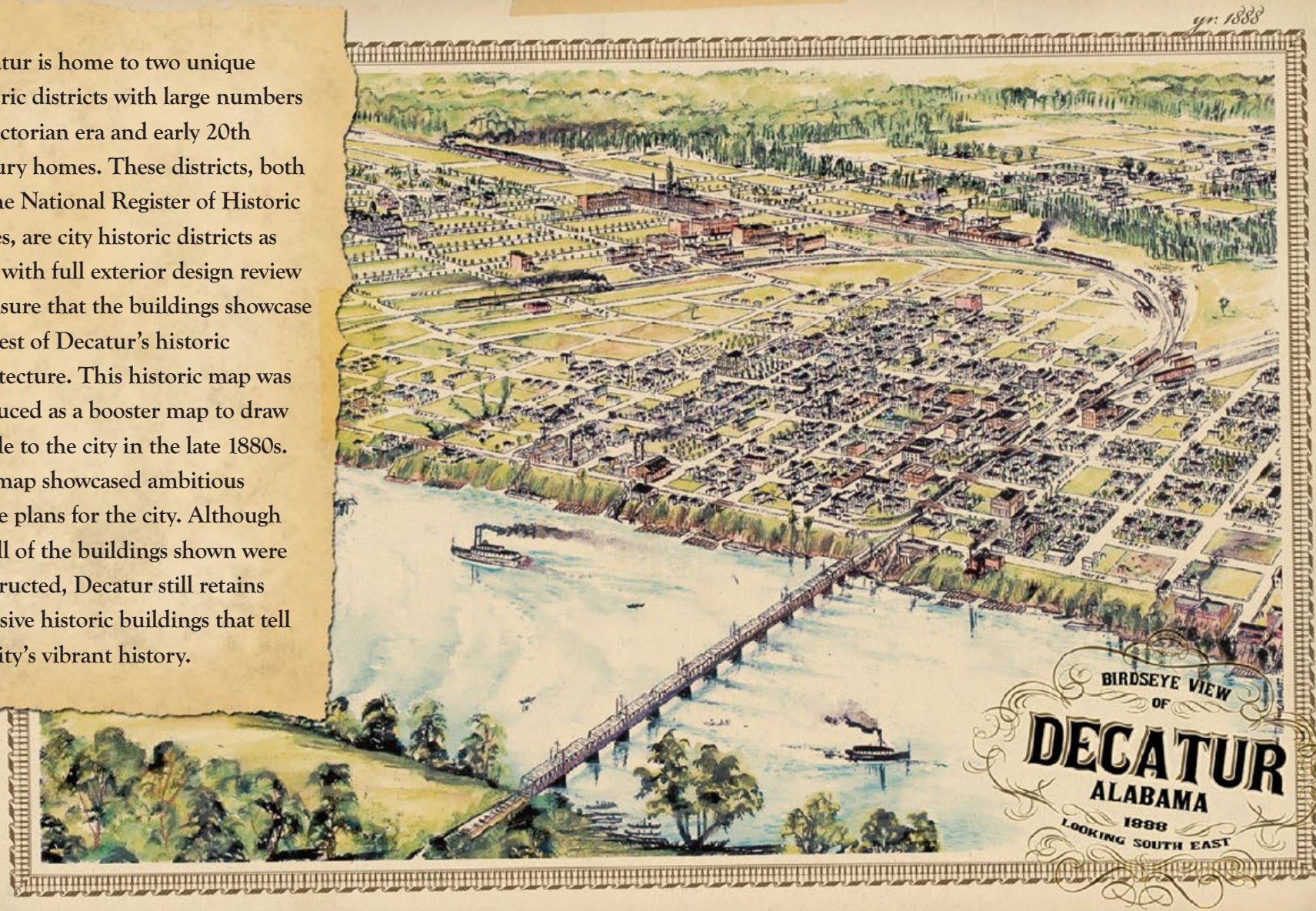
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ALBANY

HISTORIC  DISTRICT

FLOURISHING WITH RICH HISTORY & ARCHITECTURE,
DECATUR, ALABAMA, IS HOME TO TWO UNIQUE HISTORIC DISTRICTS
THAT DATE FROM THE 1880'S TO EARLY 20TH CENTURY.

Decatur is home to two unique historic districts with large numbers of Victorian era and early 20th century homes. These districts, both on the National Register of Historic Places, are city historic districts as well, with full exterior design review to ensure that the buildings showcase the best of Decatur's historic architecture. This historic map was produced as a booster map to draw people to the city in the late 1880s. The map showcased ambitious future plans for the city. Although not all of the buildings shown were constructed, Decatur still retains extensive historic buildings that tell our city's vibrant history.



There are two tour options: Old Decatur and Albany. Each tour takes about an hour.

ALBANY

HISTORIC DISTRICT



In the last half of the 1880s, after the ravages of the Civil War, Decatur began to grow again and the railroad gained in importance. The prospect of new financial opportunities drew northern investors to the area. In 1887 the Decatur Land Improvement and Furnace Company began promoting a sister city to the southeast of Decatur, called “New Decatur.” Headed by Major E.C. Gordon (for whom Gordon Drive is named), the new city was advertised as the “healthiest city in the South with modern water and drainage system.” The political, economic, and social rivalry was so intense between the two communities that the people of New Decatur decided to change their name in 1916, voting to rename themselves “Albany,” after Albany, New York, the hometown of many of the residents.

The “Yankee” industrialists brought industry and prosperity back to Decatur. They built large, modern homes and symbolized the town’s new heritage by naming streets alternatively for Union and Confederate generals. More than 7.5 million dollars was spent purchasing and developing 5,600 acres of land southeast of Decatur. Downtown Albany

featured churches built by northern newcomers, its own schools, post office, and even a jail. The main commercial street in New Decatur was 2nd Avenue.

Decatur and Albany were separated by Lee Street and remained two separate towns until 1927 when an act of the state legislature merged the two. The united city of Decatur had a population of between 7,000 and 8,000. It was a major Alabama city at that time, and quite prosperous. Second Avenue, Albany’s downtown, remains a retail area featuring specialty shops and restaurants.

The Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad played a significant role in both Decatur and Albany in the late 1890s and early 1900s, with the completion of tracks that connected Montgomery, Alabama, and Louisville, Kentucky. Decatur was so highly thought of by the L&N officials that the city became the home base for the railroad’s repair shops, with 13 total shops in Decatur, making L&N one of the city’s largest employers for the next 40 years.



CITY OF
DECATUR

Buildings are privately
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ALBANY
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STOP 1. Delano Park & Rose Garden Gordon Drive & 8th Avenue

The Decatur Land Improvement and Furnace Company employed pioneering landscape architect Nathan Franklin Barrett to design a whole new city – New Decatur. The park was created in 1887 as a focal point of the master plan. City Park had two distinct early phases: the initial park and the stone structures built by the Civil Works Administration (CWA) part of the federal New Deal program of the 1930s. The stone structures were designed by Carolyn Cortner Smith, the state's first female architect. The park was later named after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. For decades the garden was in disrepair and the structures all but lost. In the early 2000s, it was rebuilt as a public-private venture that revitalized the park. The splash pad, a fun place to cool off during the summer months, was built on the footprint of the 1930s WPA wading pool. The playground beside the splash pad welcomes children of all abilities. There is also an interpretive trail winding through the park.



STOP 2. The Davidson House 608 Gordon Drive

This petite Queen Anne Victorian cottage was built in the early 1900s and remained in the Davidson family for about 100 years. The late Lawson Davidson recalled how he once delivered milk to many Albany residents. His cow could be seen grazing in the nine-hole golf course that faced his home. The golf course itself is long gone; today it is green space in the park that is used by neighborhood children and visitors for play and recreation.



STOP 3. The Maury House 620 Gordon Drive

This house was built circa 1887 for Richard L. and Marion R. Maury. It is a good example of a Victorian Queen Anne style home, complete with a cozy porch. Richard L. Maury followed a path across the park every day to work at the L&N rail shops at which he was the chief clerk.



STOP 4. The Godbey House 626 Gordon Drive

The Godbey house is an American Foursquare that was influenced by the Arts & Crafts movement. Built circa 1910 for Attorney Edgar W. Godbey and his wife Lucille, it was one of the most expensive houses in Decatur at that time. The Godbeyes were rumored to have spent \$25,000 on the home's construction. The house includes a sleeping porch, which was considered a necessity for healthy sleeping.



STOP 5. The Wolcott Home

1012 Gordon Drive

Built circa 1919 for Robert H. and Dora Cain Wolcott, this house is an excellent example of the Craftsman style that was popular in the early 20th century. The wide spread gable ends complete with brackets and exposed eaves along with the interior's box beam ceilings, French doors, and brick fireplace are typical of this style. The use of natural materials and a casual floor plan made Craftsman-styled houses a popular successor to the earlier Victorian styles which were notably more formal. The west end of the porch has a porte-cochere, designed to provide covered parking for an automobile. The high step off that end made it easy for the owners to step onto the floorboard of a Ford Model T.



STOP 8. The Payne House

651 Sherman Street

The Payne House was built in 1890 for New Yorkers Edward C. and Belle Payne. It is an elaborate example of the Queen Anne Victorian style. The clapboard first story contrasts with the decorative shingles on the second story and the pebbled stucco on the projecting gables. The encircling veranda's columns reveal the influence of the Colonial Revival style. Edward owned the Payne Lumber Company and was an early mayor of New Decatur. He served again as mayor when the town changed its name to Albany. He also owned the first electric car in Decatur.



STOP 6. The Propst House

824 Sherman Street

This two-story Tudor Revival house was built in 1939 for Samuel Noland Propst and his wife Clara by Samuel's father, Joseph Wiley Propst, who was a partner in Propst & Howell Lumber Company of Cullman, Alabama. A unique feature of the house is the quarter sawn oak trim milled by Propst & Howell Lumber Company. The exterior of the house is clad with Decatur brick.



STOP 7. The Peebles House

502 8th Avenue

This one-story house originally had a Sherman Street address, but when Ms. Eula McEntire Peebles purchased the house in the 1970s she made a front door on 8th Avenue. She allegedly said, "I like the house, but I'll be damned if my address will be named after Sherman!" Now the house has an 8th Avenue address.



STOP 9. The Jervis House – 652 Sherman Street

The Jervis brothers, who were born in Wales, moved here in 1887 from Ohio. The two jointly owned the Jervis Lumber Company and built houses next to each other. This house, which belonged to John D. and Elizabeth E. Jervis, is an example of the Free Classic Victorian style, which became common in the 1890s. A revitalization of Classical styles influenced architects and classical details and columns were used to ornament Queen Anne Victorian designs. That trend is notable here with the Palladian double portico incorporated into the typical encircling Queen Anne veranda.



STOP 11. The Hoff House 636 Sherman Street

The Hoff house was originally built in late 1800s and was the home of George Atlee and Margaret A. Hoff, who arrived in Decatur in 1889. George eventually served as president of the Morgan County National Bank. Margaret Hoff created the elaborate gardens using plants from the Wheeler Plantation and Bankhead Forest. When the Hoff's son and daughter-in-law, Atlee H. and Maude Hoff, moved in starting in the 1920s, they decided the Victorian house was no longer fashionable and proceeded with a massive remodel of the structure in the late 1920s, adding the Colonial Revival elements. Atlee was chairman of the Morgan County Bank and also served as president of Decatur's Board of Education. An unusual feature of the house is the extensive use of red gum wood, once native to Alabama, for interior woodwork and wainscoting.



STOP 10. The Jervis House 646 Sherman Street

This was the home of Abram D. and Annie Jervis. Abram was the brother of John D. Jervis who lived next door. Abram served as treasurer for the Jervis Lumber Company. Abram and Annie also owned the Jervis Foundry & Machine Company.

STOP 12. The Eyster House – 626 Sherman Street

Built circa 1888 for L&N engineer George C. and his wife Margaret Allen, this house originally showcased the Queen Anne Victorian style. Charles H. and Kitty B. Eyster purchased the house circa 1917 and remodeled the house substantially by 1935 in the fashionable Colonial Revival style of the day. Charles was an attorney with the firm of Eyster and Eyster, and also served on the board of the local Coca-Cola franchise.



STOP 13. The Spight House 601 Jackson Street

The Spight House, built in 1912 is another excellent example of the Colonial Revival style, which was particularly prominent in Albany. Early residents were William R. and Eliza L. Spight. William was president of the Home Oil Company. The Spight's daughter, Anne Lou, and her husband, Seneca B. Burr, lived here as well. Mr. Burr worked for Brock and Spight Wholesale Grocers.



STOP 14. The Bibb House – 629 Jackson Street

The Queen Anne-styled Bibb house is one of a handful of historic homes with a turret in the city. It also retains its impressive multi-colored slate roof. In 1895 William Ashbury and Eliza Bibb bought the house for \$2,500 at a tax auction. Bibb was a grandson of Alabama’s first governor and served as president of the Morgan County National Bank.



STOP 18. Westminster Presbyterian Church 801 Jackson Street

Westminster began when a group of 16 men and women met in 1888 with the Reverend John Davis, who had been sent to New Decatur by the Presbyterian Home Mission Board. Reverend Davis returned to the board to complete his training, but upon his return he was not allowed to leave the train because of the Yellow Fever epidemic. The following spring the Reverend E. Horace Porter was sent to New Decatur as Westminster’s first pastor. When he arrived there was no church building, only a lot on Eighth and Jackson.

STOP 15. The Neill Home 646 Jackson Street

Built in 1910, the Louis A. and Jesse D. Neill home is another excellent example of Colonial Revival architecture. Note the giant order of the front porch columns, the boxed cornice, and wide frieze. Louis practiced as a dentist. His office was on 2nd Avenue.



STOP 16. The Borton House 650 Jackson Street

Built circa 1906, this Free Classic Victorian has design details that originate from Queen Anne Victorian and Classical revival styles. Leaded and stained-glass windows along with ornately carved mantles are outstanding features of the house. This house was home for Alonzo W. and Alice H. Borton. Alonzo served as president of the Decatur Cornice & Roofing Company, which was located at 601 Johnston Street.



STOP 17. The Simpson House 651 Jackson

Built in 1911 for William H. and Mary D. Simpson, this house is an example of Georgian Revival architecture that was so popular early in the 20th century. William was appointed judge of the City Court of Decatur in 1889 and became chancellor of the Northern District of Alabama in 1894. Mary was known for her charity work at Central Baptist Church.



STOP 19. Connecticut Mills Company House 1038 Jackson Street

In the 1920s, R. E. Spraggins, Shelby Fletch, H. B. Beard, and John W. Knight were recruiting the Connecticut Mills Company to construct a cotton mill in Decatur at the site now occupied by Hyosung. As an incentive, in 1927 they built two residences for mill officials. This house was built for the plant manager, Roland H. Gray and his wife Fannie L. A few years later Connecticut Mills Company failed and Goodyear acquired the factory. Mr. Gray stayed in Decatur for several years and served as the first executive director for the newly formed Chamber of Commerce. The house next door, 1036, was constructed for the plant’s vice manager.





STOP 20. Cortner Smith House – 623 Grant Street

This large stone house was designed and built in 1934 by pioneering female architect Carolyn Cortner Smith for her widowed mother, Clara Ashford Sanders Cortner. Ms. Smith was known for her use of native materials such as the stone used in this house. Carolyn Cortner Smith also was responsible for the design of the stone structures and the 1930s rose garden at Delano Park, and for an early restoration of the Old State Bank in the Old Decatur Historic District.



400 Block of Jackson Street

The south side of the 400 block of Jackson Street has the most intact set of late Queen Anne and Free Classic Revival Victorian houses in the Albany Historic District, most built between 1888 and 1906. Many feature pebble and stucco gables.

435 Jackson was home to Lovick P. and Anna Troup. Lovick served as a probate judge for Morgan County.

339 Jackson was home to Robert and Dora C. Wolcott. Robert served as a mayor of New Decatur in the 1920s.



STOP 21. The Bowles House 445 Jackson Street

Built in the early 20th century, this house was originally located on the south side of Jackson Street in the 600 block. It was moved to its current location in the early 1920s by a mule team and was left in the street overnight before being placed on its current foundation. An older neighbor remembered that it looked like a “bride left at the altar” – all white, screened porches slightly listing and forlorn. Thomas A. and Argentina Bowles were the residents in the early 1920s. Thomas was a cashier at Central National Bank. The current owners were told the house was haunted at the time of purchase. So far they report a happy coexistence and no complaints of any spirits.

STOP 22. The Wyatt House 425 Jackson Street

In 1887 three well-to-do Wyatt brothers from Covington, Kentucky, stopped at Rhodes Ferry on their way to Birmingham. Mr. L. Buford Wyatt was so impressed with the L&N railroad shops and the ship building facilities in Decatur that he and his brothers determined Decatur was the “hub of the South” and settled their families here on the 400 block of Jackson circa 1890. L. Buford and his wife Jennie resided at this house. Mr. Wyatt was a real estate agent.



STOP 23. Vintage Faith
413 Sherman Street

In 1898 the Mission Organization of New York State of the Congregational Church built Christ's Mission, but the congregation failed to thrive.

In 1901 St. Paul's Lutheran Church bought the building and utilized the church for 67 years.

In 1951, to increase the size of the sanctuary, the church had the building turned on the lot. The mover allegedly assured the anxious pastor that if

he so much as rang the bell during the move, the mover would pay the preacher \$50. The bell did not ring.

Immediately beside the church is a small house that was constructed in 1901 as a school by the St. Paul's congregation. The original building was one room wide and three rooms deep and used potbellied stoves for heating. Church records show that besides the three R's, English was taught in this mainly German-speaking community. The building functioned as a school for a few years and then had additions to accommodate serving as a parsonage for St. Paul's for about 50 years.



STOP 24. Papenburg
425 Sherman Street

Built circa 1920 for Henry and Mary Papenburg, this home is an excellent example of the American Foursquare style. The boxy foursquare shape provides roomy interiors for homes on small city lots. Typical of the style is the two-and-a-half stories, four-room floor plan, low hipped roof with a deep overhang, central dormer,

and full-width porch with wide stairs. Mr. Papenburg was a merchant who immigrated to the U.S. from Germany in 1890. A small studio photograph of Mary and the Papenburg's three children remains in the house.

STOP 25. Fort Decatur
610 4th Avenue

Construction on the Decatur Armory, now known as Fort Decatur, began in 1937 as part of the New Deal programs and improvements to Delano Park. Some of the stone veneer used on this structure and the stone structures in the park is believed to have been quarried in Morgan County by teams of WPA and CCC workers.



You will see the small Girl Scout Little House located to the rear of Fort Decatur, facing 6th Avenue. Designed as an open-air pavilion by Carolyn Courtner Smith, walls were added in the 1940s by the Girl Scouts who have continued to use the building as a hub for activities. If you cross 6th Avenue to the east end of Delano Park, there are interpretive history markers that continue through the park.



STOP 26. St. John's Episcopal Church **202 Gordon Drive**

After the Episcopal Church in Old Decatur burned in 1889, newer members of the parish wanted to rebuild nearer their homes and received permission to organize a parish in "New Decatur." Thus, St. John's was established in 1890 and became a parish in 1891. The church building, comprising the present nave and chancel area, was dedicated in 1893. Originally facing north, the building was physically turned in 1948 to face west. At the time, the present entrance and tower were built and the building was stone veneered. St. John's interior is modeled after Gothic English parish churches.

The final stop on the tour - the Princess Theatre - is on 2nd Avenue. You'll notice the specialty shops and restaurants along the street. Many of the original buildings from the turn of the century housed hotels and mercantile stores with living quarters above.



STOP 27. The Princess Theatre **112 2nd Avenue**

The Princess Theatre on 2nd Avenue has been a North Alabama landmark for more than a century. Built as a livery stable for the Casa Grande Hotel in 1887, it was transformed into a silent film and vaudeville playhouse in 1919. The theatre presented high-class road shows, pictures, and vaudeville. After a facelift in 1941, the Princess emerged with the Art Deco Style that remains today, featuring a brilliantly lit marquee containing more than 3,000 feet of neon tubing. In 1978 the City of Decatur purchased the Princess Theatre when the movie house closed. After a \$750,000 renovation, the Princess reopened in 1983 as a performing arts center.

The Princess Theatre was named a "Must See Arts Destination" by the Alabama Tourism Department.

For more information about Decatur, stop by our Visitors Center at 350 Market Street.



PLAYBILL

PRINCESS



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