

## ***African-American Heritage Trail Downtown Historic Locations***

### **Bettie Hunter House**

504 St. Francis Street

In 1878, the home was built in the Italianate architecture which was comparable to residences of the area. In 1852, Bettie Hunter was born a slave in Dallas County Alabama and later moved to Mobile after the Civil War. She and her brother, Henry Hunter, had a profitable carriage business in Downtown Mobile. She died at the age of 27. Having no children, she left the house to her descendents. Today, it remains with her family.

### **Dr. Thomas N. Harris**

559 St. Francis Street

Dr. Thomas N. Harris was born April 6, 1868 in Montgomery Alabama. He graduated in 1899 from Meharry Medical College in Nashville Tennessee with dual degrees in dentistry and medicine. He was one of the first black physicians to practice medicine in Mobile. Dr. Harris completed post graduate medical courses at Philadelphia Poly Clinic in Pennsylvania to further his medical knowledge. On this site, he opened Mobile's first private medical infirmary staffed with trained nurses in 1905. The infirmary was dedicated to improved healthcare in the African-American community.

### **John L. Leflore- Non Partisan Voter's League**

558 St. Francis Street

After the NAACP was outlawed in 1956, Leflore and the Non-Partisans Voters League took a more active role in Civil Rights in Mobile. Leflore served as its director of casework. He was a plaintiff in Bolden vs. the City of Mobile whose judgment changed Mobile's city government to a mayor-council system. In 1974, he was elected to the Alabama State House of Representatives. The Office of the Non Partisan's Voters league was located upstairs in the Masonic building.

### **Creole Firehouse #1**

13 North Dearborn Street.

This two-story brick structure was built in 1869 with James H. Hutchison as architect. It housed the first volunteer fire company in Mobile. The company was founded in 1819. As descendents of the French, Spanish, Native Americans, and Africans, the Creoles formed their own schools, churches and owned businesses. The fire company was the center of local Creole society. The fire station remained in this location until 1926.

### **Andrew N. Johnson**

502 Dauphin Street.

Andrew N. Johnson was born in 1865 in Marion, Alabama. He graduated from Talladega College in 1886 and taught in rural Alabama for a short while. On this site in 1894, he established the Mobile Weekly Press, a voice for African-Americans. "A. N." was a powerful member of the Republican Party and attended many national conventions. In 1896, he established Mobile's first black owned funeral home and the forerunner of Johnson and Allen Mortuary. By 1901, he opened People's Drug Store and hired Dr. T.N. Harris as the managing pharmacist. At the turn of the century, he was a major contributor to politics and business in Mobile.

### **Dr. H. Roger Williams Drug Store (1869-1929)**

607 Dauphin Street

Dr. H. Roger Williams opened one of the early African-American drug stores, *Live and*

*Let Live* on this site in 1911. Born on a sugar plantation in Louisiana, he graduated from Meharry Medical School in 1900 and was the second black physician to practice medicine in this city. He served as President of numerous medical and civic associations including the General Chairman of the Mobile Emancipation Association. He was also a published writer and poet.

### **Wallace Turnage**

118 Conti Street

In 1864, Wallace Turnage, a seventeen year old slave was owned by a merchant, Collier Minge, whose house stood on this site. Turnage escaped wartime Mobile by walking 25 miles down the western shore of Mobile Bay. After surviving three weeks in the Fowl River estuary, he paddled a row boat into the Bay. Wallace was saved from drowning by sailors in a Union Navy gunboat. In late August, 1864, he was taken to Fort Gaines and freed. Turnage's heroic emancipation was one of the most dramatic for African Americans in the Civil War. He later lived in New York City where he wrote his rare narrative, discovered in 2003 and published in 2007 in the book, *A Slave No More*. Through bravery and determination on this, his fifth attempt to escape, Turnage seized his own freedom.

### **Slave Market**

Royal Street between St. Louis and St Anthony Streets

After the abolition of international slave trading in 1808, dealers transported slaves from all over the South into Mobile. On this site, Africans were sold as chattel to southern planters through public auction. Between auctions, a three-story holding facility housed the slaves until they were displayed and sold. In an attempt to make this inhumane and abhorrent aspect of slavery less conspicuous, the City banned slave depots from the downtown area. A developing rail system eventually made Montgomery, Alabama, the principal slave market. However, planters who sold cotton in Mobile continued to buy and sell slaves in this City.

### **The Basilica of the Immaculate Conception**

10 S. Claiborne Street (not marked)

Construction of the magnificent Cathedral of Renaissance design began in 1835. It took fifteen years to complete. The records of the Cathedral are among the oldest on the Gulf Coast. They begin with the document signed by the French settlers in 1704, installing the first Catholic pastor of the Parish of Mobile. Every member of the congregation including Creole and Native American families, are in the church records. These records include a continual chain of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths beginning in the month of September in 1704.

### **Emanuel A.M.E. Church**

656 St. Michael Street (not marked)

Built in 1869, a brick structure replaced it in 1881, and in 1890-1891 Mobile architects James H. Hutchison designed the Gothic Revival façade. Architectural historian Elizabeth Gould called the brick patterning of the Gothic lancet arches “unusually fine.”

### **St. Louis Street Missionary Baptist Church**

108 North Dearborn Street (not marked)

This church dates its beginning to 1853. The first three pastors were white. In 1865 the title was transferred to the first African-American pastor, Rev. Charles Leavens. The current church building dates to 1869. In 1874, the Alabama Baptist Convention passed a resolution at this church to establish an educational institute called Selma University.

Phase II, or the final phase of the African American Heritage Trail's project will produce several versions of driving tours significant to African-American history in Mobile:

1) *School Bus Tours*- Bus Tours will be developed to target elementary school aged children. School Buses can be used. Narration will be targeted at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade comprehension level. Target is to reach every 4<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school in Mobile County.

2) *Self Driving Tours*- A detailed Black Heritage Trail map and narration can be downloaded from AAHT Website for a self guided tour. There will be an internet component to the Trail. From the City of Mobile's Home page, [www.cityofmobile.org](http://www.cityofmobile.org), there will be a link to the African-American Heritage Trail Site. Every historically significant site, person, and event pertaining to African-American history in Mobile will be accessible.

3) *Step On bus tours* will be available. Large groups may charter a private tour, set up through the Mobile Historic Development Commission. Brochures will be developed and placed in the official Welcome Center located in Fort Conde as well as other locations throughout the city. Sites on the Trail will be identified with historic markers. Street signs will also be placed throughout the Trail to direct visitors.

