

## St. Lukes Church

St. Luke's Cahawba 1854 - 1876 The preservation and restoration of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Cahawba, Alabama is of critical concern to the Cahawba Advisory Committee(CAC) and all friends of Cahawba.

This structure captures an essence of Cahawba and the history that the Cahawba Advisory Committee seeks to preserve.

Please take a few minutes to explore this history of St. Lukes and how you can help preserve this historic treasure.

### Time Line

- 1854 Built at Cahawba, Alabama in an enhanced Richard Upjohn design
- May 1854 Consecrated by Bishop Cobb
- 1874 Diocesan Convention declares St. Luke's abandoned
- 1875 Bishop Wilmer declares St. Luke's open
  
- 1876 former parishioners allowed to move St. Luke's 15 miles away to Martin Station
  
- 1900 Rev. Cassell conducted the last Episcopal Service at St. Luke's
  
- 1901 the Church was closed
  
- Early 1900's the Martin family allows local congregation of African Americans to use Church building
  
- 1930 - 2000 several attempts made to save or relocate St. Luke's
  
- 1936 Building was photographed for the Historic American Building Survey, now on file in the Library of Congress
  
- 1981 the Atkins family deeds the Church lot to the Trustees of Azion Baptist Church
  
- 1980's Diocese of Alabama officially deeds building to Azion Baptist Church

- 1986 Mystery surrounding St. Luke's location at Cahawba is solved when AHC archeologist Linda Derry discovers St. Luke's 1½ foot print left buried at Cahawba
- 1995 Sarah F. Peveler writes St. Luke's, Cahaba: A Case study in Preservation and Adaptive Reuse
- 1997 Ronald J. Caldwell writes A History of Saint Luke's Episcopal Church Cahaba, Alabama
- 2000 St. Luke's is rediscovered by a CAC Member
- 2000 the Member contracts with the Azion Baptist Church Trustees to furnish the Congregation with a modest up to date building in exchange for the St. Luke's structure which has fallen into disrepair
- 2001 the Congregation's new building is completed and St. Luke's Building passes into private hands
- 2002 AHC purchases the St. Luke's Building at cost
- 2002 CAC makes preliminary cost estimates on stabilization and relocation of St. Luke's Building
- February 2003 CAC passes a Resolution encouraging the AHC to apply for a Grant for stabilization, relocation, and restoration
- May 2003 AHC Foundation applies for the Grant
- May 2003 CAC approves \$200,000 Grant to AHC Foundation for the St. Luke's Church Project
- June 2003 Alabama Legislature expands CAC powers
- October 2003 AHC General Fund Appropriation is cut by 29%
- October 2003 CAC General Fund Appropriation is cut by 75% thereby reducing by 75% funds available to finish Land Acquisition and Restoration Projects like St. Luke's.
- November 2003 CAC votes to open an E-commerce website and start media advertising to expand awareness of the plight of Old Cahawba including St. Luke's Church, Fambro House, and Barker's Slave Quarters and to encourage donations from the public.

- April 2004 a Structural Engineering Survey is conducted to determine the best procedure to relocate St. Luke's back to Cahawba

- May 2004 One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of Consecration of St. Luke's Church

Compiled April 2004 by James Hammonds, Cahawba Advisory Committee

In the Fall of 2006 the Cahawba Advisory Committee, the Alabama Historical Commission and the Auburn University College of Architecture's Rural Studio formed a partnership to save St. Luke's Church. It is currently being disassembled and will be reassembled at Old Cahawba in 2007.

#### Overview of St. Luke's Church, Cahawba

It is necessary to place the St. Luke's Church Project in proper perspective. The information in this Overview covers 1854 to the present concentrating on developments that affect St. Luke's Church.

By the early 1900's Alabama citizens were rediscovering the ghost town that had once been the Capital of Alabama. Located on a peninsula created by the confluence of the Cahawba and Alabama Rivers, its moss covered trees, Indian artifacts, street grid, flora, artesian wells, imposing brick structures, and ruins created an aura hard to resist.

**Interest Renewed**In 1908 Anna Gayle Fry's Memories of Old Cahawba sparked renewed interest. Cahawba became an important excursion site for Archaeological and Historical Societies. In 1925 several hundred people made the pilgrimage to Cahawba to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of LaFayette's visit. In 1926 annual spring pilgrimages by Riverboat were sponsored by the Cahawba Memorial Association. This was a movement to preserve the cemeteries, ruins and structures still standing in Cahawba. Many citizens have spent a lifetime dedicated to this movement.

**Organizations Formed**By 1943 the State had created the Cahaba Historical Commission. The Cahaba Historical Commission by enlisting the help of local citizens and the Dallas County Commission managed several projects and

reopened the main streets of Cahawba but it did not have condemnation authority or regular State funding and each year more and more structures fell to the elements and vandals. By 1970 only three historic structures were still intact on site. In 1975 authority over the site was transferred to the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) with the hope of finally developing a State Park at Old Cahawba. The Cahaba Historical Commission became the Cahawba Advisory Committee (CAC); a State Agency tasked with advising the Alabama Historical Commission on the development of Old Cahawba.

**Major Progress Made** Some progress was made but it was the 1980s before there was real progress. The advent of the friends group, the Cahawba Concern, and the Cahawba Festival combined with the work of the CAC and local legislators to help the AHC to buy more land, build a welcome center, and hire a full-time staff. By the late 1990s with both the AHC and the CAC receiving regular State funding, hundreds of acres for the Old Cahawba Archaeological Park had been bought. In May of 2000 the AHC voted to acquire the remaining property by whatever means necessary. Since that date the CAC has provided grants to the AHC for that purpose totaling over one million dollars. The remaining property would have been acquired in the next two - three year period but budget cuts will postpone the final phase of land acquisition.

**Restoration Begins** The AHC has acquired title to the only two remaining intact historical structures on site, the Fambro House, a 1840s raised cottage, and the Barker Quarters, a two story brick slave quarters. Although money is technically available to stabilize and partially restore the Fambro House and the Barker's Slave Quarters, red tape and the lack of a AHC Master Plan combined with current funding issues has prevented much stabilization or restoration.

Perhaps another dozen intact structures that once stood at Cahawba are located in Dallas County. These were moved mostly during the 1870s. The AHC now holds title to the most architecturally significant of these, St. Luke's Church. The CAC has awarded a \$200,000 grant to the AHC Foundation to relocate St. Luke's to Old Cahawba, its stabilization, and the seed money for restoration.

Rear & Side Elevations St. Luke's Martin Station, Alabama

Detail Elevations St. Luke's Martin Station, Alabama

Special Thanks  
The Cahawba Advisory Committee would like to thank Alabama Historical Commission archeologist Linda Derry for her input and discovery efforts in this critical phase of this project.

[http://cadc.auburn.edu/soa/rural-studio/projects\\_stlukes.htm](http://cadc.auburn.edu/soa/rural-studio/projects_stlukes.htm)