

Preliminary Observation Notes

1872 Vicksburg & Brunswick Railroad Depot

Adaptive-Use Renovation for First Methodist Church Building

Corrected and Revised April 15, 1997

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Huntsville, AL

April 10, 1997

The following preliminary notes result from a 4-hour site observation visit on 9 & 10 April, 1997 to observe in general the apparent historical, technical and functional conditions at the depot in regard to its possible adaptive-use renovation to house a small (non-regulation size) game court for basketball, volleyball, etc., a stage, kitchen (non-commercial type) and classrooms, with appropriate restrooms, mechanical spaces, etc., insofar as the +50' x 150' one-story building can accommodate.

The 1872 building is substantially intact. Items which are missing or deteriorated are easily reproduced or repaired. If the numerous sashes stored in the basement are the ones from this building, they can be repaired and put back. While the stack of sashes could not be examined individually, they appeared to range from intact to mostly intact. The sashes could be installed as "fixed" (non-openable) to save cost and energy, if the building is to be cooled or mechanically ventilated. Sheet acrylic storm glazing can be almost invisibly installed inside, if desired. The six large freight doors are in poor repair but consist of simple planking and battens. They can be repaired/replicated as "fixed" unit for energy conservation. At least one, the N.W. door, should be modified as a building entry, with a code-complying handicapped ramp and emergency exit. A second emergency exit must be made at or near the opposite end of the building. These can be designed in a manner that does not intrude on the historical appearance of the building. The original exit doors can be out-swung without altering their present mounting positions on the frames, a detail we used on the 1860 Huntsville Depot.

The present modern standing-seam metal roof (industrial type) can be retained since its general appearance is not harmful enough to require its replacement. Some minor repairs are said to be needed (bullet holes). It would help to paint the roof a dark blue-green color.

The outstanding visual feature of the interior is the open timber and iron trusswork of the tall roof structure. It is most desirable to retain this appearance, both historically and esthetically. The church's need for a gymnasium-type space lends itself to this perfectly.

Historically it is best to retain and restore the original four rooms of the east end of the building, especially if grants for restoration are to be sought. One space can be a kitchen and the others can be classrooms. Each of the four spaces is about 400 s.f., or about 20 ft. square, with two windows per room. At least one of the mantels is in the basement, intact. This mantel can serve as the model for any that are missing. The fireplaces would be non-functional, of course, for safety. All of the door frames and some of the doors are in place for these four rooms and the east front entry. Missing doors can be replicated. Salvage or reproduction hardware is available.

The present fluorescent lights detract from the recreation space. More attractive and more energy-efficient lighting is available that would throw some light upward into the attractive timber and iron roof trusswork.

It would be allowable, I believe, to install several skylights over the recreation space. Use the flat-glazed type rather than the dome type. Clear this with any grant source.

The modern steel and wood storage loft at the west end of the freight room is easily removable. This is the area contemplated for a simple stage, restrooms and storage. The areas above and below the non-stage area could be accessed by stairs for storage. The basement space could be developed for dressing and shower rooms, if desired. While the basement spaces are low (about 7 ft. high) this is adequate for that purpose. They could be dug out to 8 ft. high, probably, without digging lower than the footings.

To further conserve usable space on the main floor, restrooms can be located in the basement, down a short 8 or 9 foot flight of steps, with one unisex handicapped restroom being located on the accessible main floor. This technique has recently been used by Jones & Herrin at the 1854 Humphreys-Rodgers House Museum in Huntsville. The basement restrooms would be in conjunction with the dressing rooms for sports and theatre, to save still more cost.

While the east end of the building could be developed for two floors of classrooms, I believe classrooms would require (check the code) two sets of enclosed fire-resistive stairs of about 7 ft. 6 inches wide by 18 ft. long (switch-back stairs). This would consume about 600 s.f. of total gross floor area (2 stairs x 4 areas), making the space gain not worth the cost. The stairs would occupy about one-fifth of the total available room space at the east end.

The "Americans With Disabilities Act" exempts religious buildings, but the City of Eufaula code would still apply for all aspects of the building. Handicapped accessibility would be required, but not (in my opinion) to any second-floor or basement space. A code review with the City Building Official should be held early in the design process.

The present modern plywood floor in the recreation space is laid over a non-original 1 x 4 tongue-and groove pine floor which is laid over the original full-1-inch thick x +6 inch wide dense heart pine floor. In an adaptive-use renovation, I believe it would be acceptable to install a modern gym floor over the original floor if desired (review with grant sources). It would not be good to sand down the original floor, in all probability, because of probable deep wear areas near to the tongues and grooves. It would be better preservation to cover the original floor.

If the present metal roof and open trusswork are to be retained, there is no historical and esthetically good way to increase the roof insulation over the recreation room. Since church buildings are not used but a few hours per week, perhaps this extra insulation is not needed. The 16-inch thick brick walls provide excellent insulation. The approximately 6 ft. high walls above the brick walls can be heavily insulated, as can the ceilings over the smaller rooms and stage area. All doors and windows would be made airtight. The recreation room could be mechanically ventilated and not air-conditioned, perhaps, as some churches do. A modern insulated ceiling dropped under the trusses would destroy the interior space and should be avoided. If it is decided that more roof insulation is desired over the recreation room, rigid high-efficiency insulation (2 inches thick) could be fitted to the underside of the roof deck and covered with planking to retain most of the present interior appearance. A cost study of energy use by a mechanical engineer should be performed before a decision is made. The present 16-inch thick brick sidewalls are excellent insulation and are not an energy concern (some mechanical engineers are not aware of this and it may need to be pointed out).

Mechanical rooms and ducts can also be in the basement or attic, as is most convenient for the system. For the recreation room, neat, painted cylindrical ducts run through the truss spaces would be perfectly acceptable from the historical and esthetic points. This is a technique used by Jones & Herrin (and others) in several "Tax Act" restorations.

Mechanical condensers, meters, etc., should be inconspicuously located on the south side of the building, probably near the S.W. corner or S. E. corner, and should be screened by a brick-lattice enclosure. Any modern devices on the building walls should be painted a brown color to blend with the brick.

The brick walls contain a considerable percentage of soft underbaked salmon-color bricks, which were typically used as filler rather than as face bricks, as has been done here. Salmon bricks are almost like adobe, very soft and subject to powdering in repeated wet-dry cycles. Capillary rising of ground moisture creates this wet-dry cycling, as seen in the Depot. In the past, rough cement parging has been troweled onto the lower interior and exterior faces of the brick up to about 6 to 8 feet above the soil line to try to patch the brick surfaces. This has greatly disfigured the walls. The best procedure would be as follows:

1. Improve the soil drainage to lead the roof and ground water quickly away from the building.
2. Remove the parging and deteriorated brick outer wythe from the walls in 4-foot wide isolated sections and replace the spoiled bricks with a "Bickerstaff Woodmould" brick in a closely matching color, size, mortar color and joint profile. Doug Purcell has our instruction sheet on how to do this. A good mason is needed. As long as 4-foot-wide by 1-brick-deep isolated sections are removed there should be no structural problems in the process. Twelve-inch thick wythes would remain in place, and each truss bears on a 20 x 20 inch pilaster, more than adequate.
3. If the budget prohibits the above, simply paint the parging in a flat latex masonry paint that blends with the overall coloration of the masonry and this will help somewhat.
4. Where mortar joints have powdered (interior, exterior, and in the basement) properly repoint the joints with matching-color and joint profile hydrated lime mortar. Doug Purcell has our instruction sheet.
5. "Rising damp" can be stopped at grade by a fluid-injection process by the "Pro-So-Co" company in Atlanta. We used this process successfully on the 1819 Weeden House Museum in Huntsville in about 1980 and on a c.1820 home in Courtland.

The Committee asked about the two diagonal cracks in the brick wall at the N.W. corner. Their direction indicates that the soil within about 10 feet of the N.. W. corner was slightly compressed by the building's weight more so than the other soil. Very likely this compression took place shortly after the building was completed and has ceased. The cracks can be neatly grouted with brick-colored lime mortar and monitored for a year or so. If the cracks recur, the soil may be of the type called "Plastic" that swells and shrinks according to ground-moisture content. If so, we have stabilized such soil by injecting cement into the soil under controlled conditions. We have used this on three early 19th century buildings with success.

The modern brick and concrete freight docks, of poor construction, should be removed. Presumably the Depot had long wooden platforms along each side, but these need not be rebuilt.

The plank soffits under the roof eaves are mostly gone and must be replaced to match, with screened vent-strips installed inconspicuously.

The two trusses that support the diagonal hip-trusses have deflected two or three inches due to the extra load imposed on them. There would be no reason to try to level them. While the trusses are probably alright, a structural engineer should advise on whether to add stiffener plates. All trusses should be examined for wood deterioration, loose connections, solid bearing, etc.

The floor structure consists of three basement bearing walls running the length of the building at about 12 feet on centers, crossed above by 2.5 x 12 inch dense heart-pine joists about 16 inches on center, topped by full 1-inch thick x 6-inch tongue and groove dense heart-pine floors. All this is designed to carry heavy loads of freight and is more than adequate for church-use live loads.

A miniscule amount of insect and decay damage was observed in the basement joists. Some mechanical damage and resultant propping is present, mainly due to the improper imposition of dead-loads from the bearing walls of the modern west end storage platform above, whose weight was put in mid-span of the floor joists. This platform is to be removed. Any new walls on the main floor should bear onto the basement bearing walls or otherwise be properly supported in the basement.

Parking is already ample to the west and north. Handicapped spaces should be created on the west lot, with curb-cuts and a walk to the N.W. entry ramp. The present ramp does not meet code and must be rebuilt. Steps down from the N.W. lot need to be built. Proper lighting for the parking and grounds should be provided.

A more appropriate entry stair to the attractive east front entry should be provided, and the use of this entry encouraged. Are there historic photographs of this entry?

The several wall-painted advertisements on the south exterior wall should remain. They are visually interesting and add to the history of the building and the city.

Based on this brief look at the building and our experience in the restoration of over 700 structures (including 3 depots and several railroad related buildings) it appears that the restoration cost for the described purpose will probably be about \$60 p.s.f., to \$70 p.s.f. maximum. An interested and qualified contractor is a necessity, for both reasonable cost and competent work. The contractor must like historic buildings.

We recently restored a large and heavily deteriorated 1902 auditoriums/classrooms building at Judson College for about \$62 p.s.f.—a much more elaborate building than the Depot. This included a large 3-stop elevator (for pianos) and chair-lift, complete heating/ventilation and cooling, and electrical, plumbing etc., and considerable brick repair and wood repair.

As a general rule we find that the restoration of a neglected building such as the Depot costs 2/3 to 3/4 as much as a modern-design building of the same size and function. The most expensive restoration we've worked on, to museum standards, cost only as much as a modern-design building would have been. We have never experienced a restoration whose cost exceeded that of a modern-design replacement of the space.

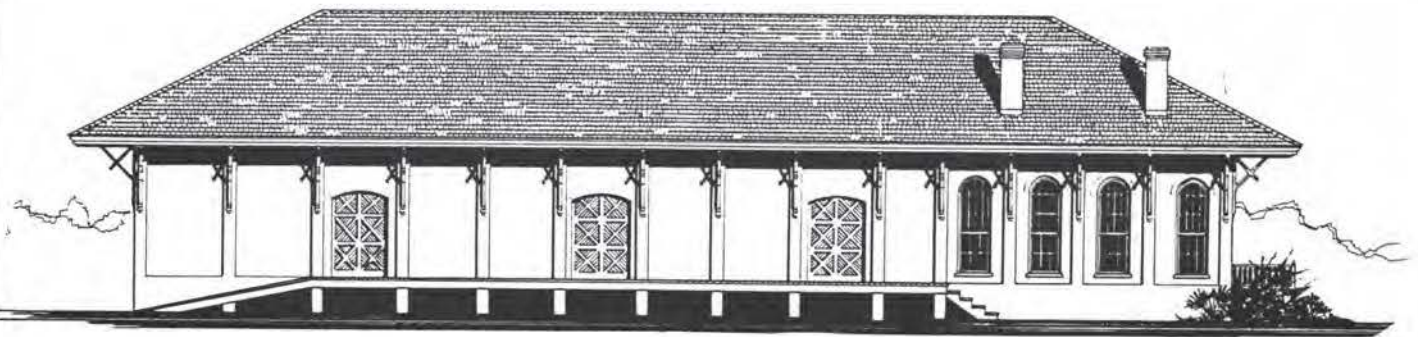
Jones & Herrin recently built a new recreation/classroom building for a Huntsville church. The cost was about \$85 p.s.f. at that time, probably \$90 p.s.f. in 1997-98. This correlates to +\$60-\$70 p.s.f. for a probable restoration cost for the depot (2/3-3/4 cost of a new modern building).

This 1872 Depot is a beautiful Italinete-influenced historic building that is an important part of Eufaula's 19th century heritage. It is most desirable that it remains and is made useful again, particularly inasmuch as the proposed uses fit so well to the original spaces of the building. Few basic modifications are needed, which is both good economics and good preservation.

bama, on the originally projected route; the twenty-one miles were completed in 1871. In 1872 the Southwest Railroad Company leased the line, but by 1879 the line was up for sale at foreclosure proceedings. It had endorsed \$300,000 worth of Barbour County bonds and could not pay the interest. Liability for payment eventually evolved on Southwestern's creditor, the Central Railroad and Banking Company of Georgia, which purchased the railroad for \$80,000 to protect its credit.

FIGURE 44

Vicksburg and Brunswick Depot, 1871 EUFULA, AL



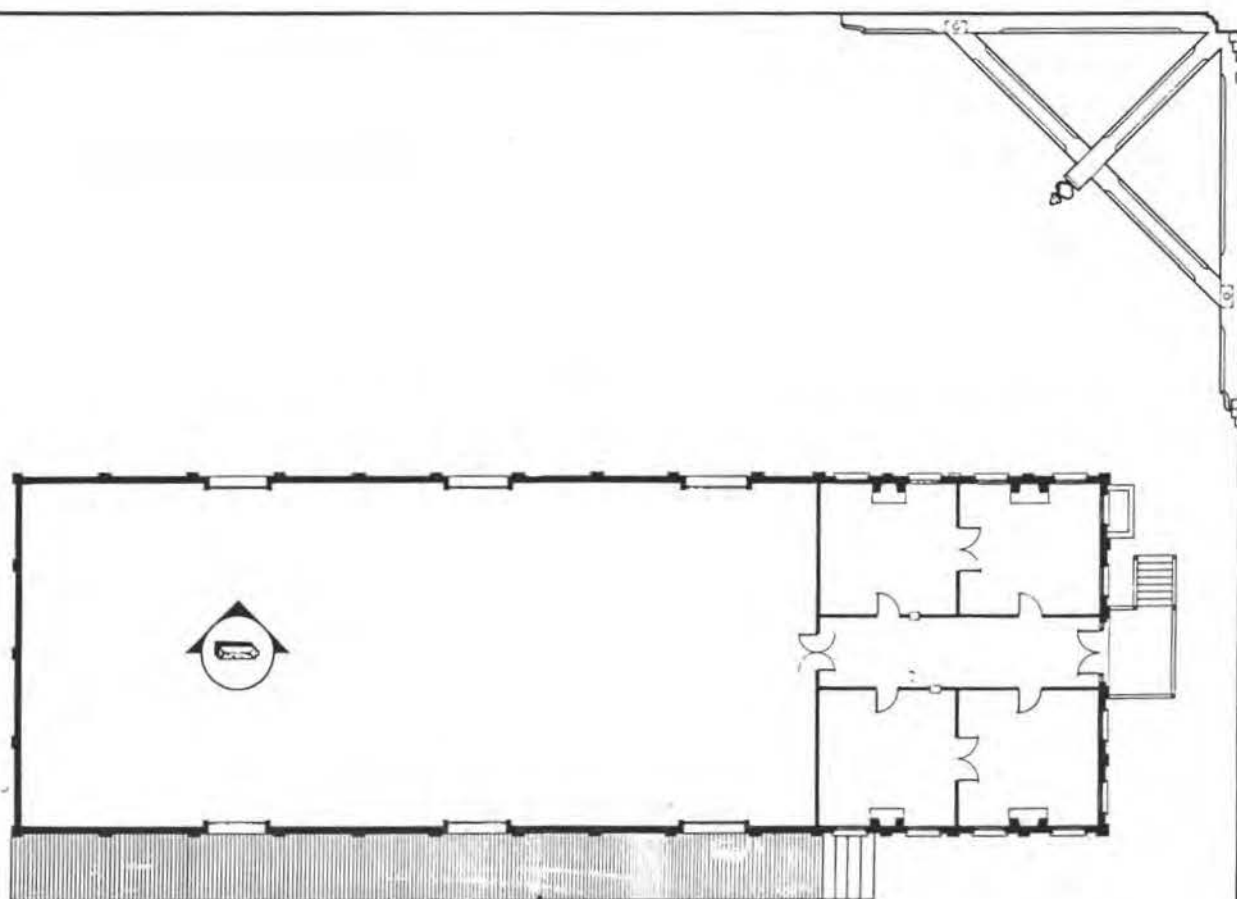
South Elevation

*Owned in 1957 by First Meth. Church of Eufula, Doug Purcell - contact
Dir. of Hist. Chattahoochee Comm.*

Copies April 1957 H Jones, from

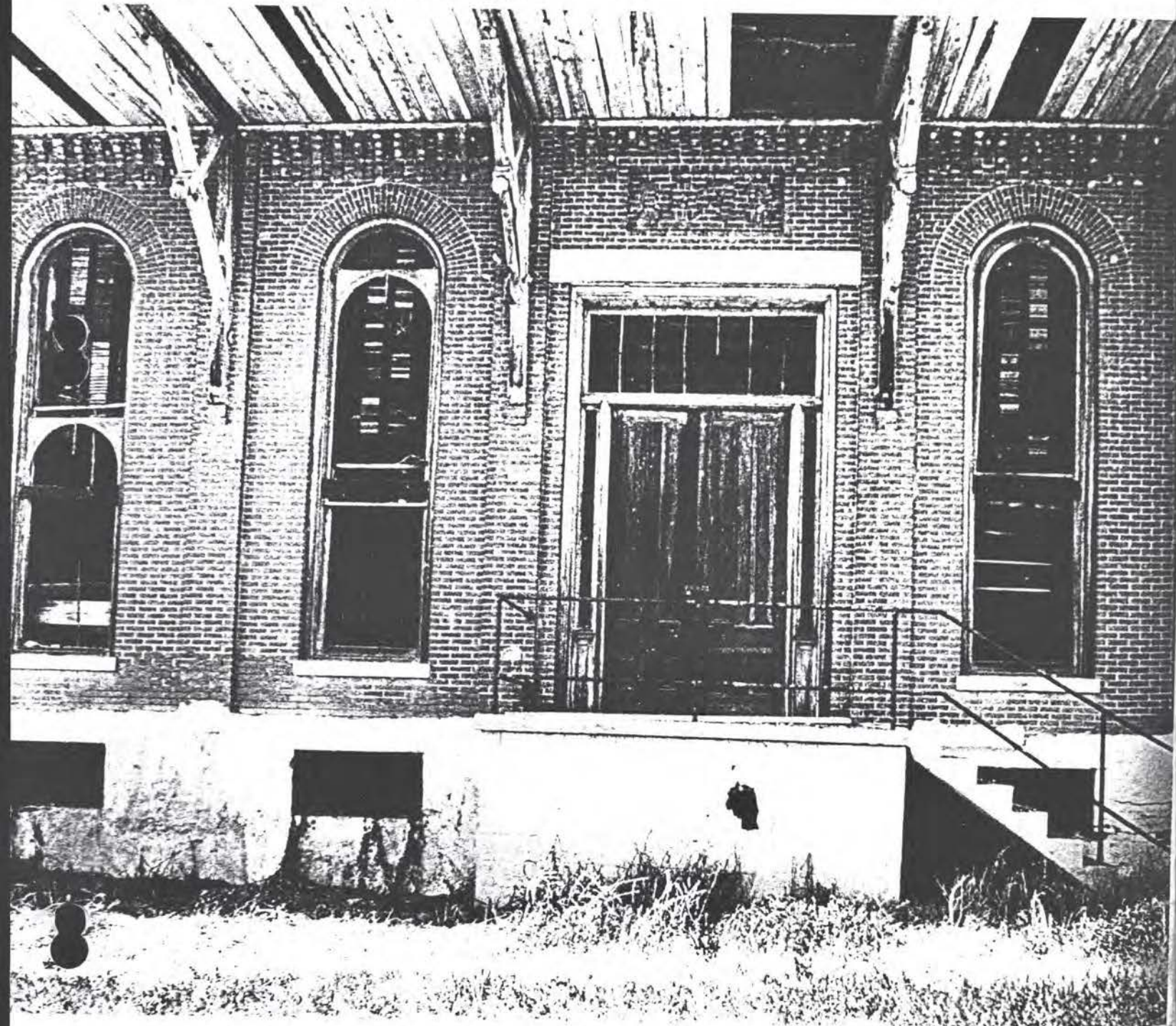
UP.

In 1883 the railroad was reorganized as the Eufaula and Clayton Railroad. W. G. Raoul was elected president, Ed McIntyre secretary, and as directors, J. E. Jones, T. B. Gresham, G. L. Comer, and George H. Dent. By 1888 the railroad had been extended to Ozark, a distance of forty miles. For a time the building in Eufaula was known as the Eufaula and Ozark Depot. In 1891 a new depot was finally built in a different location as a result of public demand and the poor condition of the old structure. Shortly



Floor Plan
0 30

Vicksburg and Brunswick Depot.
View of entrance. Note the arched windows.



after the depot was constructed, the railroad declined in importance, so the building was seldom used for the railroad. It was leased for various purposes until 1948, when it was sold to the Eufaula Hardware Company for a warehouse.

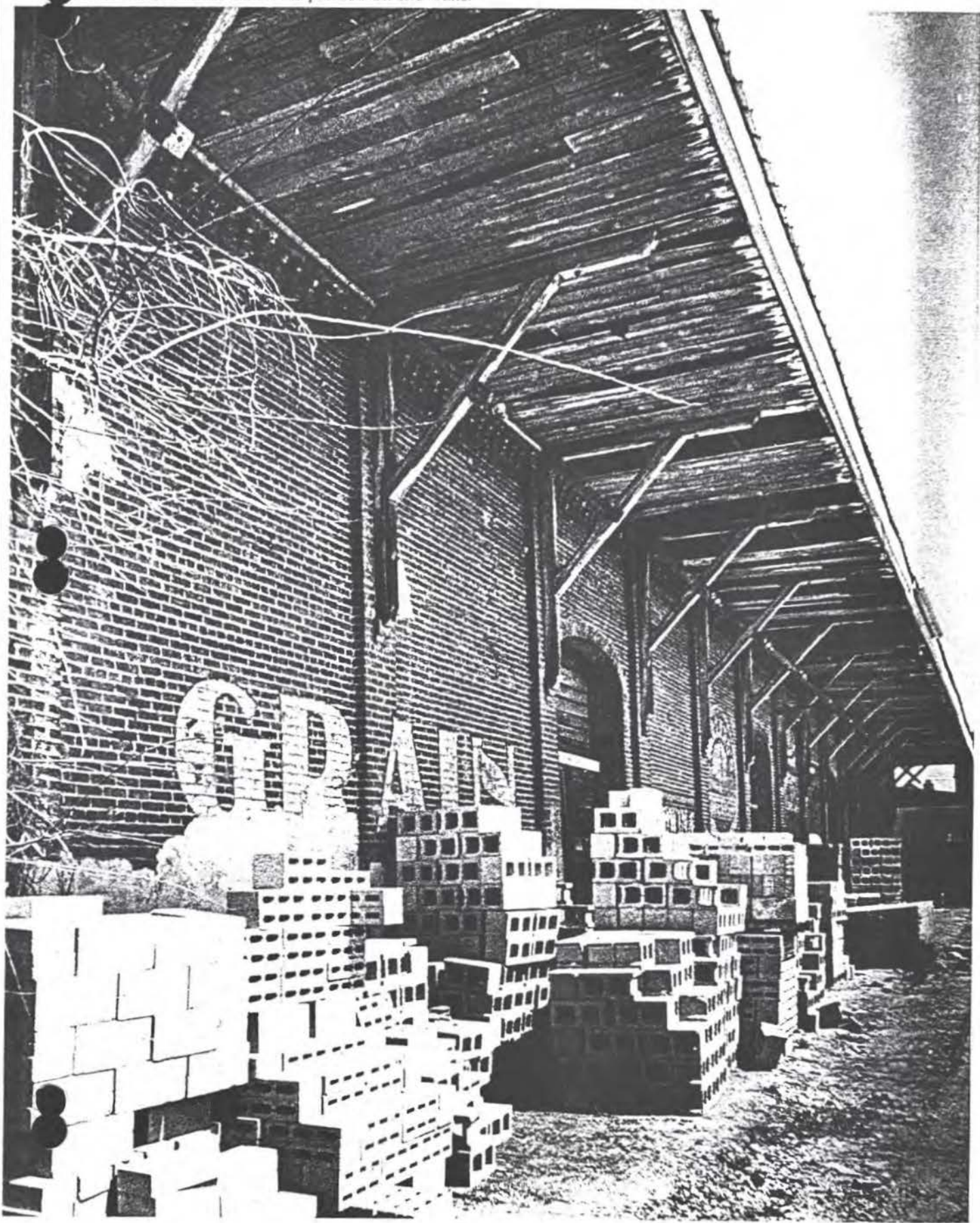
The depot is an imposing structure of brick with walls 12 inches thick. The roof trusses are supported by brick pilasters built up the exterior walls. Each pilaster has a wooden bracket as decoration and as additional support for the broad overhang of the roof that forms a shelter for the docks. Each truss is made from three 2 x 12 inch beams that are spliced and bolted together.

The doors and windows are unusually large. The windows are interesting in that they are arched on the exterior but finished square on the interior and shuttered. The four front rooms served as offices and as a passenger waiting area. The bulk of the space was used for storage. The building is in fair shape and could be an interesting functional restoration project. Similar depots have been converted to restaurants, boutiques, flea market facilities, and the like.

Vicksburg and Brunswick Depot.

View down side along the loading platform.

Note the brackets, the tremendous trusses they partially support, and the old advertisements painted on the walls.



Vicksburg and Brunswick Depot.
Detail of storage area door
and advertisements painted on walls.





the Civil War, Brierfield Furnace was quickly restored. The war by its very nature... However, time and the elements have taken their toll since the Brierfield Furnace was abandoned in 1894. (Photograph by Robin McDonald) Below: The handsome and sturdy Vicksburg and Brunswick Railroad Depot, with its large and unusual windows—arched on the exterior but square and shuttered on the interior—offers many possibilities for adaptive restoration, but its current owners are undecided about its future. (Courtesy Alabama Historical Commission)

ever, owner of the Vicksburg and Brunswick Depot, is undecided about whether to tear the building down and build a parking lot or renovate the depot as a recreation complex for children. Structurally the building, now 125 years old, is in good shape.

HISTORIC MILL VILLAGES STATEWIDE

FIGURE VI Demolition

MANY ALABAMA TOWNS contain an area of modest housing constructed as part of a textile mill plant. The houses are generally one-story, wood-frame cottages, and planned along a grid system, as can be seen in such communities as Cordova, Bemiston, Huntsville, Tallassee, Prattville, and Selma. Commercial and institutional buildings are often mixed in with the residential

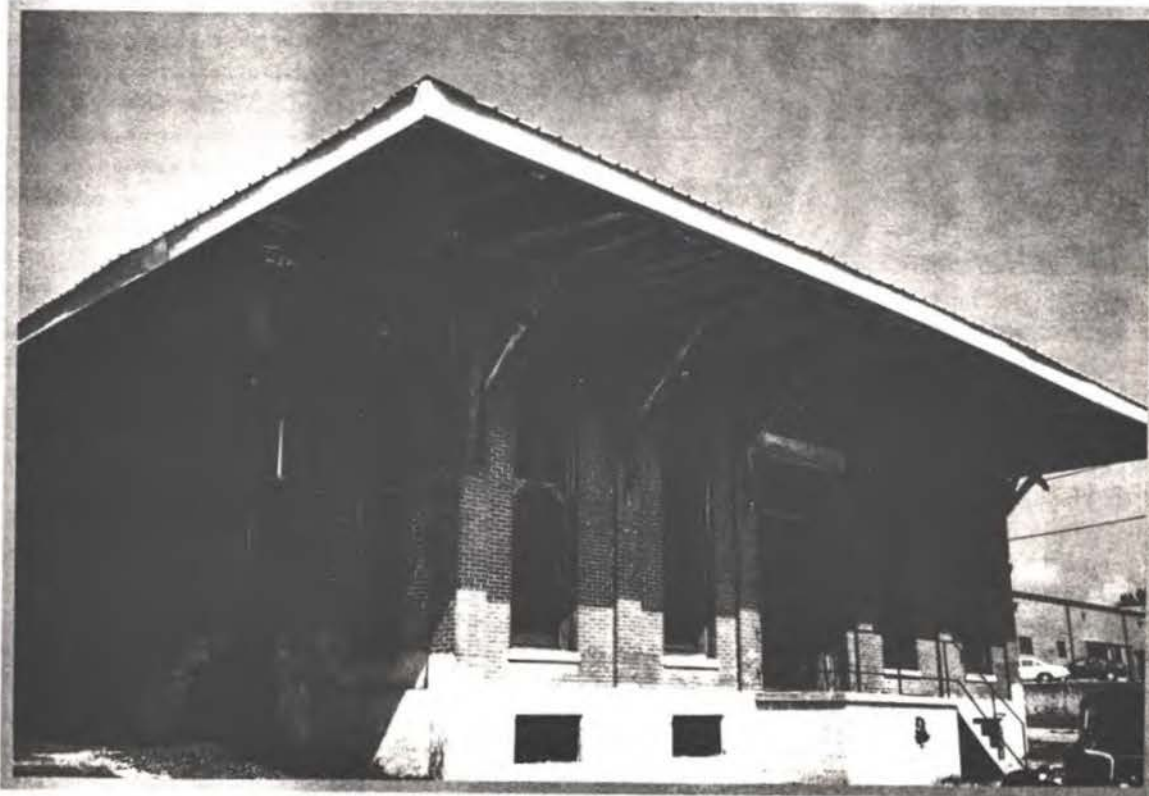
VICKSBURG AND BRUNSWICK DEPOT EUFALA

FIGURE VII Demolition

BUILT IN 1872, the graceful Vicksburg and Brunswick Depot, Alabama's finest Reconstruction-era depot, is representative of the functional yet attractive depot structures built during the heyday of the American railway industry. With its large and unusual windows—arched on the exterior but square and shuttered on the interior—and twelve-inch thick walls, the building is both imposing and sturdy. Operated by different railroad companies over the years, the depot changed hands several times and in 1948 was purchased by the Eufaula Hardware Company for use as a warehouse.

The reclamation of historic railway depots has been accomplished in numerous Southern cities. Designed and built for use by large numbers of people, these fine old buildings have found new lives as restaurants, boutiques, senior citizens' centers, flea market facilities,

Pres. study by J.H. Dred. - HJ - '96



Achim,
Removed (2/5/02)

5/26/1975
Machin industrial
1000 ft x 100 ft

1 of 16 photos April 1997
1871 Vicksburg & Brunswick R.R. Depot
(passengers + freight) Eufula, AL
Ch. Roe, Bldg. (Dory Purcell = contact w/HU)
- Study for rehab. for
1st Methodist Ch.
Dennis by Eufula, AL.

1871 EUFULA
RR DEPOT





7



12



7

2



2

Counter-weighted
"sash" doors
slide up. See
int. photo

3 of 16



↓
sloppy patching of
cement is modern.
"Rising damp" ↑
soft bricks

— 42



— 42
↓

gray
granite sill
(Chi)



20th cent. iron roof with
corr. block entry stoop

soft common brick ← → "pressed brick" ST. FRONT (EAST END)
on St. front only, 1/4" - 1/8" fs.



cast iron gravel-space vent
+ Modern portland-cem. pargeing
over soft bricks



modern stoop, original entry →

St. ↗

St. ↘

50415



↑
↓

EB 51 ST. - FRONT ENTRY

"pressed bricks" on
St. front only.
J_s = 1/4" - 1/8"



modern
concrete
plat.

All lx
soffit
bds.
gone
this side.
See p. 1



NORTH SIDE
(plat. gone)

Shabby modern
portland cement
parge, due to
"rising damp" &
soft underbaked
bricks

70416



N ←

↑
N.W.
CORNER

arrows = diagonal settlement cracks
(don't appear serious)
See HJ rept.

N ←

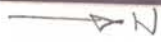
N.E.
CORNER



Soft underbaked
bricks & deterior.
lime-mortar jts.
at N. wall near
E. end (typical)
+ mod. cem. parging



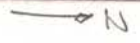
← mod.
parging



Modern: ply. over orig w.A. fl., parking on walls
 floor. lbs., sports equip



triple 2x12 truss
 bottom chords,
 1" φ iron brgs, etc



90816

N ↘



↑
Volleyball
net

↑ mod. con.
paving

SOUTH WALL

Modern str.
plat of W. end
(steel joists etc)





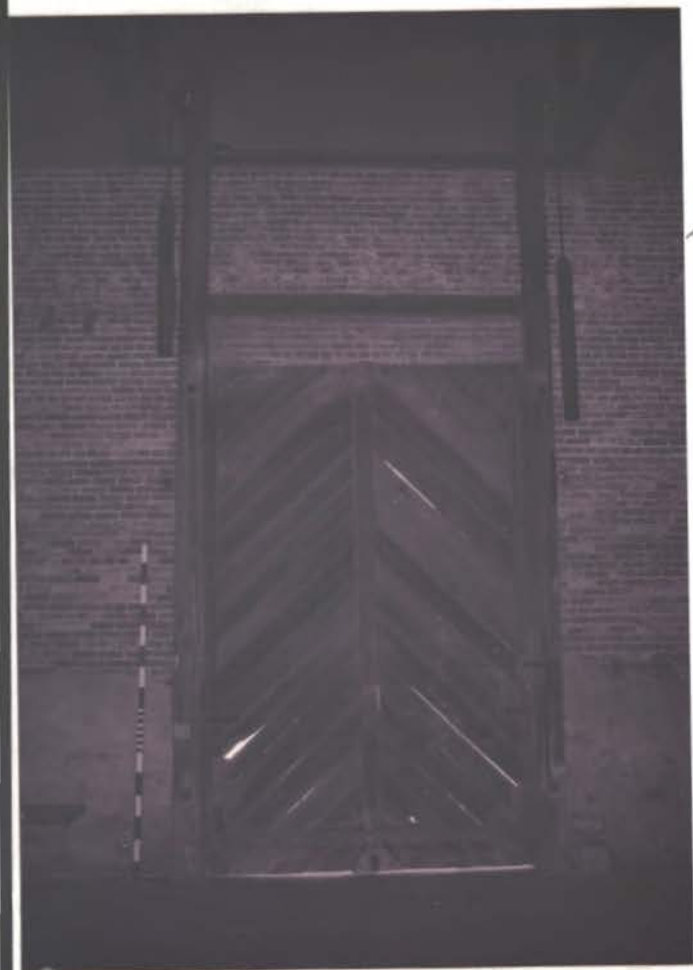
counterwt'd door
slide up



Soft →
underlight
brick &
detenir.
lime mortar

mod.
cam.
padding

9/20/11



A2



IRON COUNTERWEIGHTS

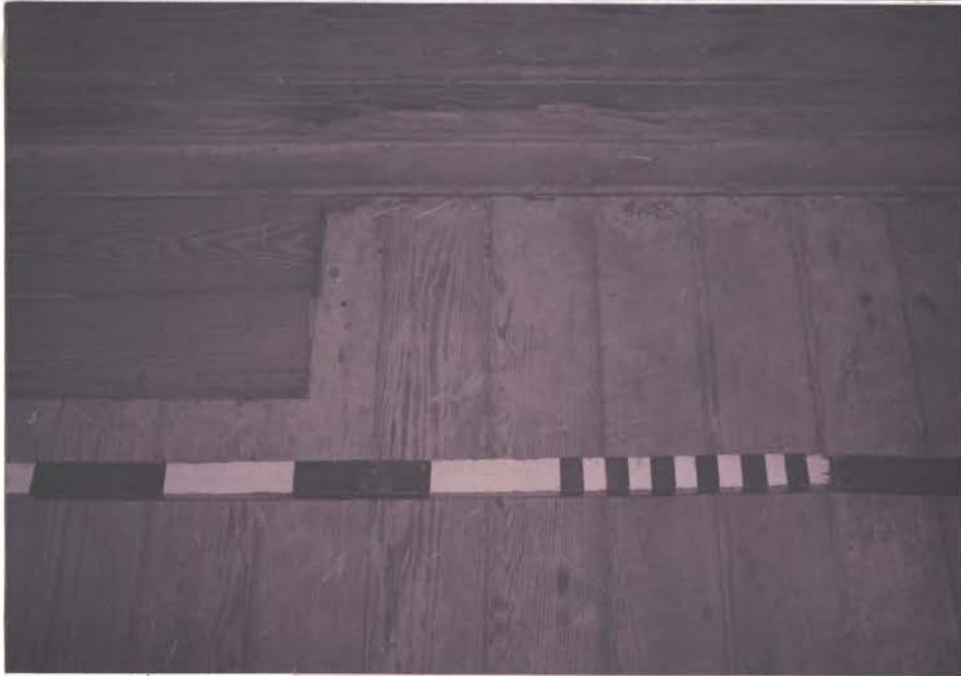
B2

DOOR TOP

TYPICAL FRZ. DOOR
(N. DOOR, EAST MOST)

DOOR
BOTTOM



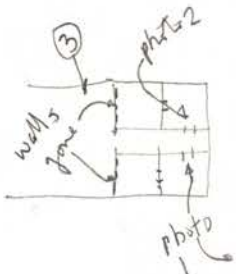


1x6
T&G
2nd
fl.
↓
Full 1"x
± 6"
T&G
ORIG. PL.
(DENSE
HEAVY
PINE)

→ N



(3) vD



→ N

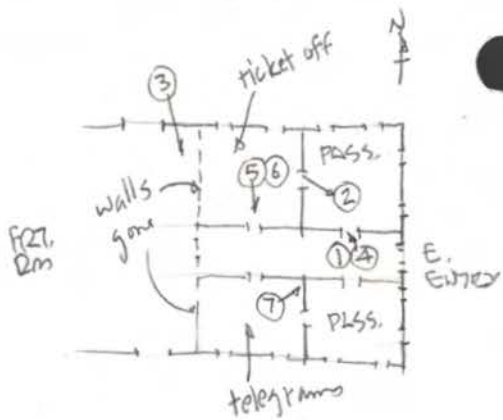


(1)



(2)

13 of 16



24

⑤

⑥ N



⑦





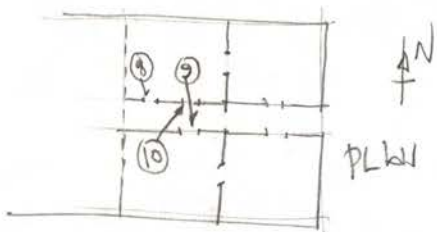
bH (8) door to hall
from N. Corridor



bH (9) S. Corridor
beyond
(view in hall)

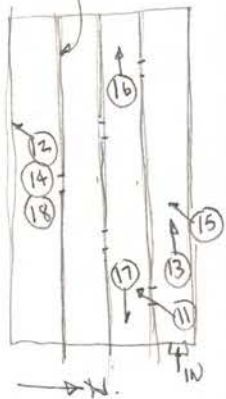


bH (10) N. Corridor beyond
(view in hall)



15 of 16

brick bearing walls



N

(11)

CRACK
SPALL

S

(14)

N



heavy dusting
from deterior.
brick mortar

(12)

negligible wood
deterior.
observable



(13)

N

(14)

N



(15)

Joists
 $\pm 3" \times 12"$
 $\times 16"$ oc.
 Fl. (no subfl.)
 $= 1"$ full-thick
 $\times \pm 6"$ or more
 dense pine

(16)

modern props
 under
 improperly
 placed modern
 str. plat. at
 west end of
 Ext. rm.

16416



(18)



(17)



deterior-
 brick &
 mortar at
 S. extremity
 below grade
 + above

Sashes,
 probably from
 this bldg., most
 look o.k. or
 repairable.