

Fairhope Hotel/Summit Street Inn
1925.

Captain John “Jack” R. Cross and his wife Eloise Cardiner came to Fairhope in 1908. A native of the United Kingdom, Captain Jack Cross earned his rank as an officer as one of Queen Victoria’s Westminister Guards. Upon arriving in Fairhope, they stayed on the Ring Farm outside of town for two years before moving into town. They became innkeepers at The Gables, located on the southwest corner of Church Street and Fairhope Avenue. They were so successful they decided to build their own place. Today’s Summit Street Inn was built in 1925 as the new Fairhope Hotel by Marmaduke Dyson, a well-known contractor. His distinctive style is easily recognizable in many Fairhope homes for his rock-faced or dimpled cinder blocks, known locally as Dyson Block.

Cross served on the library board of trustees and was a member of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, was a charter member in 1923 of the Baldwin County Historical Society. They say Cross never met a stranger, with newspaper accounts referring to him as the “Sage of Fairhope” who corresponded with thousands of people across the globe.

There is an iconic photograph of him visiting with another native of England, friend and Mobile artist Roderick Mackenzie, on the front porch rocking chairs. Cross, “friend of artists and authors from every section of the world,” died in 1932 at the age of 82.

In 1948 W. C. Mason purchased the property and continued operating it as a hotel. It was also the meeting place for Fairhope Rotary during those years.

By 1958, Mason had turned it into a private residence. He sold it to the Milham family in the 1970s who returned it to its quaint hotel roots and opened it as the Yardarm Guesthouse and the Square Rigger Restaurant. Fairhoppers remember their fine dining experiences there in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the late 1990s, the front porch was glassed in, and the building served as a counseling center.

In 2021, Fairhope real estate broker, Shelley Springer, purchased the property. The first thing to go was the glass porch enclosure, restoring the original look, accommodating overnight guests, and modernizing its 100-year-old roots and renaming it The Summit Street Inn.