

Manual Training Building / Dahlgren Hall 1912

The Manual Training Building, now called Dahlgren Hall, was built in 1912 on a ten-acre site for the Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education. The name changed in 1981 when Harold Dahlgren donated \$70,000 to retool the shop and restore the old high school. This site is now home to Coastal Alabama Community College.

One of the two original buildings, the Manual Training building was considered by Marietta Johnson as the most attractive and most important building. She said it was favored by the students, young and old, because of the hands-on activities found inside. There were three rooms: one for clay; one for weaving, metal-working, color, and leather; and a still larger room for wood-working. She described the rooms as light, airy, and comfortable. Every child in the elementary school spent two periods daily in the shop. Work in the craft room and shop continued in the high school with even more enthusiasm.

Marietta was overjoyed when she walked into Dahlgren Hall and saw children happily occupied at self-initiated tasks. Jewelry, including class rings with precious stones inset, were designed and created in the metal-working room. Vases made in the pottery section can still be seen today at the Fairhope Museum and Marietta Johnson Museum. Furniture and wood crafts were built in the wood shop room.

Although the actual school and campus are now located on Pecan Street south of the Coastal Alabama campus, students enrolled in the Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education in 2022 are still working clay in a pottery room and building toys and crafts in the wood shop. Bird feeders and blue bird houses built by students dot the beautiful campus.

Description

Dahlgren Hall represents the modest architectural effort applied to school buildings in Fairhope's egalitarian and resource-poor environment. It was

originally constructed as a simple one-room structure with a hipped roof. Stucco was applied to the exterior and was referred to as "Single-Tax Stucco." Interior walls were covered with beaded board and wainscoting. Dahlgren Hall has retained its integrity with minor alterations. A tile roof now protects the building. Front and rear shed porches have been added. The main entrance still uses the original two doors flanked by three 2/2 windows on either side.