

Gaston Building 1924

The *Gaston Building*, built in 1924 at 336 Fairhope Avenue, housed the *Fairhope Courier* offices and print shop on the west side of the first floor. The space on the east side of the first floor and the rooms on the second floor were leased to various businesses and to the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation for office space. Local builder Marmaduke Dyson was the contractor. The "new *Courier* building" replaced a one-story structure built in 1895. Today the *Gaston Building* is the home of the FSTC offices and library.

Dedication in 1974

At the building's half-century mark in 1974, it was dedicated to Ernest B. Gaston, the principal founder of Fairhope and the editor of the *Fairhope Courier* from 1894 until his death in 1937. Three of Gaston's five children (Frances Gaston Crawford, Arthur Fairhope Gaston and Cornelius A. Gaston) continued to edit and publish the paper until retiring and selling it in 1963.

E. B. Gaston (1861-1937)

In the late 19th century, Iowa populist and newspaperman E. B. Gaston was among many reform-minded people searching for solutions to the economic and social problems of the day. Gaston and his colleagues determined that economist Henry George's idea to tax only the land - a single tax - was a viable solution, and organized the Fairhope Industrial Association with plans to demonstrate the idea by establishing a model community. Gaston's 1894 essay *True Cooperative Individualism* detailed the practical application of George's theories and how the colony would work. This "Fairhope Plan" was put into practice in November 1894 when Gaston led a small group of reform-minded

pioneers to the eastern shore of Mobile Bay to establish the cooperative Fairhope Colony. Gaston lived in Fairhope for the rest of his life, running the Fairhope Courier, serving as secretary of the FIA and its successor the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, and guiding the practical application of the single tax to the extent possible under the law.

Structural Description

The Gaston Building has a 40' frontage on Fairhope Avenue and is made of red brick veneer with a recessed central entry bay with three doors. The east door opens to the FSTC library, the west door to the FSTC office, while the front door opens to steps to the upstairs archive and leased rooms. The front second story has a balcony that was added in 1998.