

The Beckner House 1906

The Beckner house is significant as an early example of a Fairhope house built for year-round living when summer cottages were the norm.

In March of 1905 the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, a colony of just a few hundred people, purchased the De La Mare Tract, approximately five acres between Church Street and Section Street in the heart of town. In November of 1905, The Fairhope Courier reported that J. M. Beckner, his wife and daughter were planning to "get up a cottage on a lot" in the new tract. J. M. Beckner was a 63-year-old Single-Taxer born in Indiana who came South to participate in the Fairhope experiment. He chose E. D. Brann as his architect/builder, as he was also the local fire chief and had a good reputation. By late January of 1906, the foundation had been laid and by April, the house was finished. The Fairhope Courier noted, "This is one of the most attractive and comfortable homes in Fairhope . . . and an ornament to the town." The Beckners were in their new home only five months when the hurricane of 1906 struck, heavily damaging it. Although the exterior of the home showed no change, there was \$200-\$300 of damage to the interior from lashing rains that penetrated through the plaster walls. Since the 1906 storm, there have been no serious threats to the integrity of the house. Warren Stearns bought the house around 1912 and owned it until the mid-1980's. Old time Fairhoppers recall the fish market out of the back of the house from the 1920's until Hurricane Frederic devastated Mobile and Baldwin County in 1979. The Baker family owned the home when it was placed on the National Register in 1988.

The house, described as a Midwestern farmhouse style, is a one and a half story frame, cross gable, two by two bay structure. After Hurricane Frederic, this farmhouse style property was converted into

an inn and a bed and breakfast. A decade later, owner/chef Tyler King renovated the house and brought new life into it with a creole cottage style and opened the Fairhope Inn. In 2019, Paige Dawson purchased the Fairhope Inn. Dawson upgraded the restaurant area and upstairs lodging area while preserving the home's historic features.