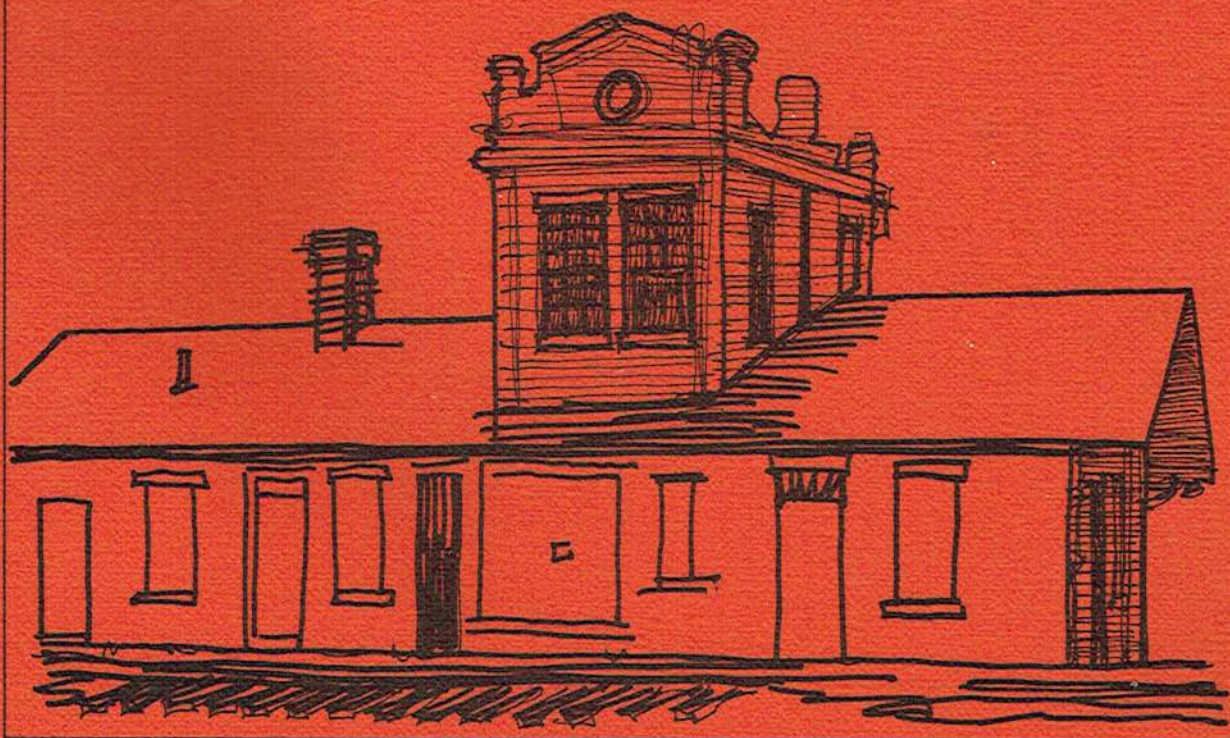


STEVENSON, ALABAMA

A Plan for
Historical Development



Tennessee Valley Authority
Division of Forestry, Fisheries, and Wildlife Development
Norris, Tennessee 37828

December 1976

A PLAN FOR HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Stevenson, Alabama

Prepared for

The Stevenson Planning and Development Board

by

Tennessee Valley Authority
Division of Forestry, Fisheries, and Wildlife Development
Recreation Resources Branch
Norris, Tennessee 37828

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INTRODUCTION

Stevenson, Alabama, is a "gold mine" of historical resources. The structures of this city tell its history in vivid detail, but these structures are in danger--from neglect and from thoughtless destruction. The people of Stevenson need to be aware of the importance of their built environment and begin a planned program of renovation and preservation of the town's many valuable sites. Inaction will lead to further deterioration and the ultimate loss of much of the physical evidence of this area's history.

At the request of the Stevenson, Alabama, Planning and Development Board, Tennessee Valley Authority recreation planners prepared this guide for the development of Stevenson's historical sites for the economic and social benefit of the citizens, tourists, and future generations.

This guide should be used only as a starting point. It describes the resources available for development and general recommendations for further planning and research. Historic preservation and development require research to establish authenticity and interpretive validity.

The Stevenson sites to be considered in this report include:

- (1) Depot
- (2) Hotel
- (3) Downtown area
- (4) General's headquarters
- (5) Several private homes.

Recommendations in this report should not be considered a final restoration/preservation plan but will be useful in preparing such plans for the sites. In addition, a more specific analysis is made of the "Fort Harker" site with accompanying guidelines for preservation and visitor use.

Stevenson Depot

Records of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad show that the Stevenson Depot was built in 1853. During the Civil War, the depot and freight house served as a supply base for Union Generals Rosecrans, Stanley, McCook, Crittenden, Thomas, Negely, and Garfield, who were headquartered in Stevenson.

The original depot building was destroyed by fire between 1853 and 1872, when the present building was constructed. Currently, the structure is not being used and its windows and doors have been boarded up. Rather than an asset to the town, it is presently an eyesore.

Recommended measures for development of the depot as a historical resource include:

1. Comprehensive research
2. Complete historical restoration
3. Landscaping of the surrounding grounds
4. Development of a walking city park adjacent to the depot.



STEVENSON ALABAMA DEPOT

Stevenson Hotel

A hotel adjacent to the depot was constructed in 1872. Trains stopped at the depot at mealtimes and passengers ate in the hotel dining room. The upstairs area of the hotel was used to accommodate overnight guests. The hotel has now been converted to small business use.

In the overall historical development of the town, the hotel building should be restored to its period appearance, both internally and externally. The restored hotel should offer services that are compatible in time and style with its early history.



HOTEL AND DEPOT

General's Headquarters

"The General's Headquarters," an old brick home located outside the downtown area, served General Rosecrans during the early summer of 1863. Restoration must begin with the clearing of vegetation that has all but taken over the site. Restoration of the structure will require extensive historical and architectural research and an almost unexhaustible source of funds. Site clearance and preservation of the structure in situ might prove to be a more practical approach.

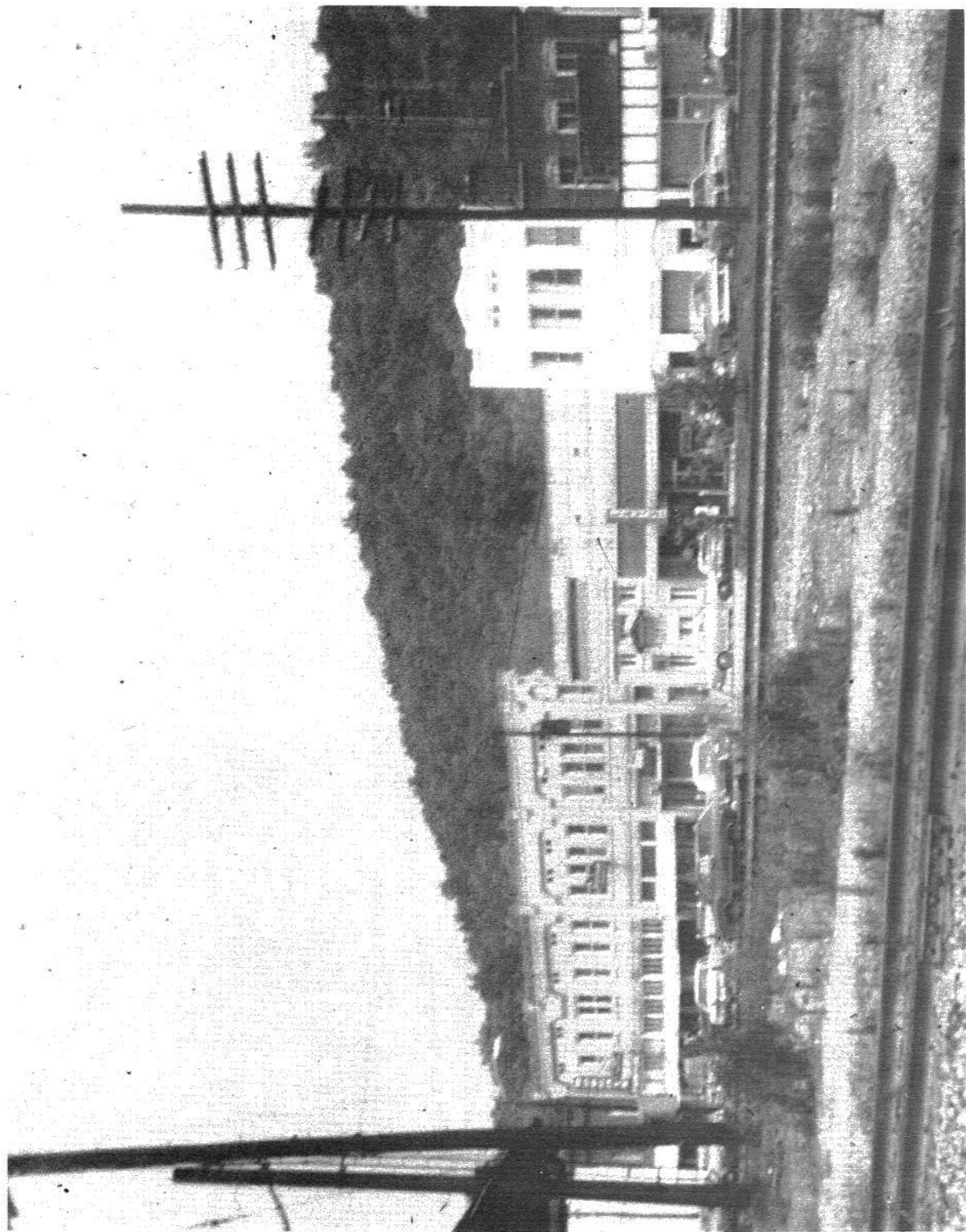


GENERAL'S HEADQUARTERS

Downtown Restoration

The character of the downtown area can be greatly enhanced through a concerted effort by all of the businessmen and property owners to clean up and restore the central business district. Actions should include:

1. Restore the facades and interiors of all the downtown buildings to original period appearance.
2. Move parking behind the downtown buildings and provide safe walkways to the business establishments from the parking areas.
3. Remove all informal parking spots in the downtown area. Establish vegetative cover on rights of way.
4. Upgrade all downtown streets with curbing and adjacent vegetative plantings.
5. Put curbs and sidewalks throughout the commercial and residential areas.



DOWNTOWN RESTORATION

Private Homes

Several private residences in and around Stevenson appear to have historical significance. From an architectural standpoint alone, they deserve to be included in overall historical development plans for the town. The following four photographs are representative of the architectural styles of these homes. When preparing overall downtown restoration plans, consideration should be given to assuring proper renovation and preservation of all historically and architecturally significant homes.









General Improvements

In conjunction with the restoration program for the town, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Road improvements to all historic sites.
2. Printing of a brochure or pamphlet which will give background information on each site. The brochure should include a map of the tour route to aid the visitor.
3. Interpretive signs for the identification of each site. All signs should be uniform in size, color, lettering, etc. An image of the depot could be used as a logo for the town's overall historical development and, if so, should be used on all signs and brochures.
4. A hiking-biking trail should be laid out to connect each site in the development program. Existing roads should be used only when no other alternative is available. The trail should also connect with both the old and the new city parks.

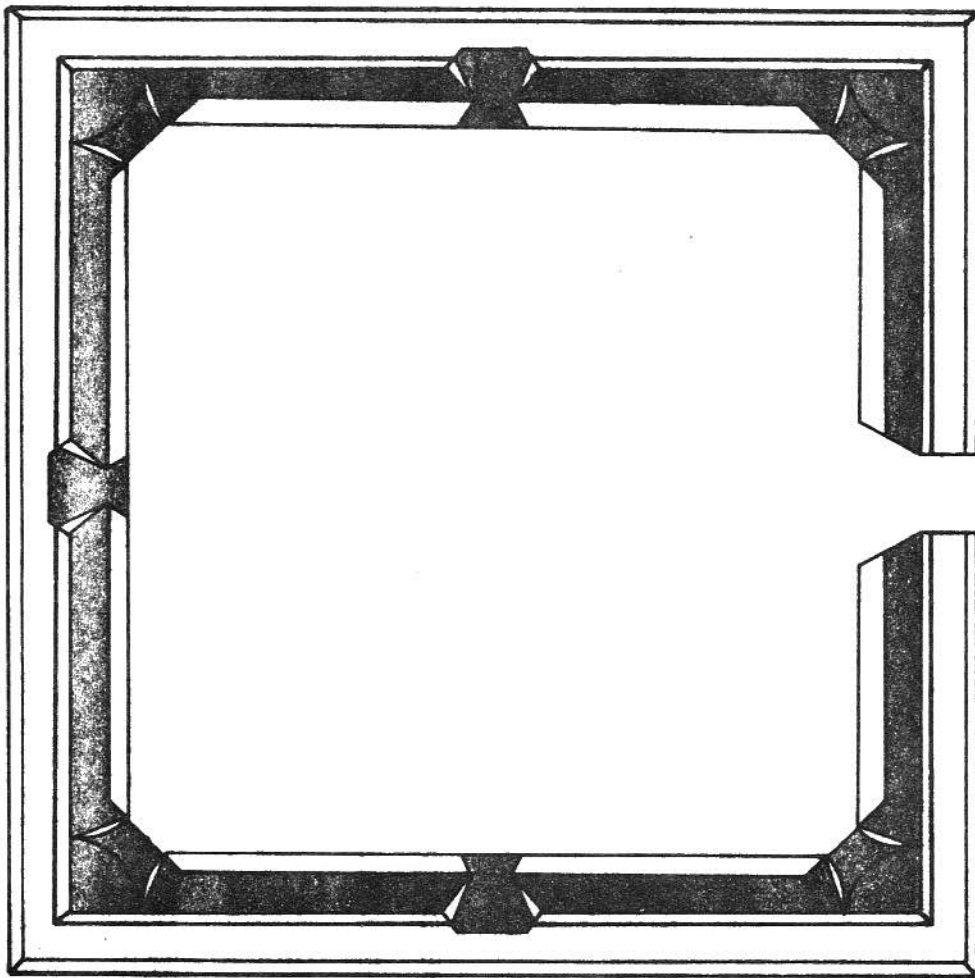
Redoubt Harker

Commonly known as "Fort Harker," Redoubt Harker was a Union Army defensive structure built by Colonel C. G. Harker, Army of Ohio, in 1862, primarily for the defense of the railroad station at Stevenson, Alabama. It was a rectangular earthen structure measuring approximately 150 feet square, and located on top of a hill providing a commanding view of the immediate area. A ditch surrounded the redoubt on three sides with the entrance to the work located on the fourth. This entrance was protected by an outlying wall with accompanying ditch. Between 400 to 500 slaves were used to construct the redoubt.

Considering its 100-plus-year age, "Fort Harker" remains in excellent condition. The walls of the redoubt rise as much as 14 feet above the ground surface. The ditch surrounding the work on three sides is as much as 15 feet deep. Four of the seven gun emplacements are still in recognizable condition. The bombproof and powder magazine have not been located with certainty. A large mound of clay near the northwest corner has not been explained.

Situation. The use of an historic structure such as "Fort Harker" for visitor-oriented interpretation programs requires complete control of the land base surrounding it. Without such buffer area control, adverse adjacent land use has the potential of destroying the sensory environment necessary for proper interpretation of the site.

The land to the north, west, and south of the work, approximately 18 acres, is owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority and is presently leased to the



"FORT HARKER"

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for wildlife management. The city of Stevenson must negotiate with the State of Alabama for use of this property.

"Fort Harker" has been nominated to The National Register of Historic Places. "Register" status protects the redoubt from adverse encroachment on all lands owned by TVA, whether these lands are leased to others or not.

The land to the east side of the redoubt is an industrial site previously owned by Chickamauga Cedar Lining Company. This company is now in bankruptcy and a lien on the property is held by a mortgage bank in Virginia. Considering the current ownership status, there are no assurances that this property, approximately 20 acres in size, will be managed in such a manner as to be compatible with the historic resource. Therefore, the city of Stevenson should acquire this former industrial site and thereby protect "Fort Harker" from any adverse development.

If acquisition of the entire property is not feasible for the city at this time, a buffer strip, 50 yards wide, parallel to the TVA property should be sought. A small office building and a fenced cattle lot on the strip should be removed and plantings established along the buffer strip to further isolate the redoubt from any adverse use of the former Chickamauga Cedar Lining Company site. Acquisition of this strip is essential so that parking and visitor interpretation facilities can be located south of the redoubt. The north side of the redoubt must be left open to preserve the strategic perspective of "Fort Harker" and the railroad junction at Stevenson.

Preservation. Until such time as the aforementioned property can be obtained, efforts directed toward the redoubt should seek only to preserve the remains in situ.

In the preservation of earthworks, a sod covering is desirable to prevent erosion even though the condition of the redoubt during the historic period was bare earth. Natural erosive processes, such as wind and water tend to have a destructive effect on earthen structures. Obviously, these processes are greatly accelerated where the earth has been laid bare.

Trees also have a destructive effect on earthworks. They compete with other ground covers for the nutrients essential for life; their shading effect retards ground cover growth, and the autumnal leaf litter often raises the pH of the soil to concentrations intolerable for ground cover survival.

With these points in mind, the following preservation recommendations are made:

1. Before any preservation attempts are initiated, the present conditions of the redoubt must be recorded for future reference. A comprehensive physical examination including topographic evaluation and soil analysis should be made. This examination process should be repeated every five years and the results filed with other preservation data on the fort. All treatments applied to the redoubt should be promptly reported and placed in the file.

2. In selecting a plant material for a sod covering over the earthwork, the problem is one of choice--whether to use a grass or a legume of some type. If possible, all vegetation should be seeded since planting will cause further disturbance of the work. In the seeding process, a commercial material, such as "Soil Saver" (a heavy jute mesh), should be used to hold the soil and seed in place until the grass is established. Exotic species of grass should be avoided. Species compatible with the historic period are preferable.
3. All tree growth up to 13 inches DBH (diameter at breast height) on the walls of the fort and the ditches should be removed. Trees in excess of 13 inches DBH should be removed immediately when weakened by old age, disease, insects, or natural forces, such as wind or lightning. All cuttings should be made flush with the ground, being careful not to disturb the surface of the work. This process will gradually clear trees from the redoubt and restore its original condition.
4. The process of preservation is experimental by nature. Alternatives are simply suggested methods to achieve desired objectives. Due to changing environmental conditions, recommendations must be flexible and open ended.

Visitor Use. Once control of the land base surrounding "Fort Harker" has been obtained and a stabilized ground surface established, visitor access and interpretive facilities can be constructed.

Access to the site will probably be provided by upgrading the existing dirt road leading to the former Chickamauga cedar industrial site. This road

will be extended to the TVA property north of the redoubt. From this point it will turn south along the proposed 50-yard-wide strip recommended for acquisition.

The access road will terminate at a parking facility designed to accommodate approximately 20 automobiles. To avoid intrusion on the historic scene, the parking area should be located a minimum of seventy-five (75) yards south of the redoubt and be screened from sight from the earthwork by vegetative plantings.

Access to the fort from the parking area will be provided via a hard surface walkway. The walkway will terminate at a "catwalk" or raised, ramped platform from which the visitor may view the fortification without actually walking over its surface.

Interpretive facilities may include but not be limited to:

1. An indoor visitor reception-interpretation facility. Located adjacent to the parking area, this center will introduce the visitor to the fort. This facility will help provide visitor control since the visitor will travel through the center en route to and from the fortification. As with the parking area, the center should be visually isolated from the earthwork.

Facilities within the center should include restrooms, a refreshment center, and interpretive exhibits explaining the significance of Stevenson and "Fort Harker" in the Civil War era.

2. Interpretive signs should be located along the viewing platform explaining the construction and interior arrangement of the redoubt. Interpretive exhibits at the redoubt should provide a sense of continuity from what the visitor has experienced at the reception-interpretation facility.

This analysis and set of recommendations must not be viewed as a final development plan for "Fort Harker." Additional research and site analysis are required prior to developing a plan of action for preserving and/or restoring the historic fabric of the site. Detailed planning for visitor use will also be necessary prior to opening the site to the public.