

A History of  
*The Historic St. James Hotel*

*1200 Water Avenue • Selma, Alabama*

The St. James Hotel was built in 1837 and is one of the few river front hotels, which remained standing after the War Between the States. The restoration of the hotel is a joint effort of an Investor's Group, the City of Selma, and over \$1 million dollars in private donations. As you tour the hotel, you will note plaques and names denoting the many contributors.

The exterior doors and window casings are all original to the hotel. The cast iron fireplace in the lobby is also original. Most of the furniture in the public areas are period antiques bought at Paris antique auctions or donated by individuals. The tea set in the lobby was donated by a lady who is an ancestor of Catesby Jones, who was the Commander of the Merrimac in the War Between the States. It was a gift brought back from overseas during his navy career prior to the war. Fabrics and colors used throughout the hotel are historic and have been used to reflect the period when the hotel was in operation.

The second floor lobby was used by the ladies to have tea and cordials while the men were in the Drinking Room. The staircase banister is original to the hotel. The ironwork on the front of the hotel balcony is original. It has been rated by historians as one of the finest examples of cast iron grillwork in the south.

The fireplaces in the historic section are not operable, but are original coal burning fireplaces. The rooms were kept as close to their original sizes and appearances as possible except for the adding of bathrooms.

During 1881, it is reported that Jesse and Frank James were guests of the St. James Hotel!

To the left of the terrace is where the steamboats loaded cotton. Dallas County was the #2 cotton producing county in the country. The hotel was in a great location due to the fact that it was near the dock, the railroad station was just down the street and the stagecoach intersection was located at the corner of Washington and Water avenues. You will see the Bridgetender's cottage located where the original bridge was. It was a turn-style bridge that had to be moved for the large river traffic passing through.

The period of architecture reflects the French influence used extensively during the 1800's. The fountain in the courtyard is symbolic of the artesian well, which was located on the property.

The Dining Room is not in the same location as it was in 1837. The original dining room was located on the second floor and doubled as a ballroom. We believe it was in the part of the hotel that was torn down years ago. A menu from the original dining room can be found in the Archives case located in the hallway next to the lobby.

