PAST PORT

18•ALABAMA BICENTENNIAL•19

A Time-Traveler’s Companion to Our Counties
The story of our great state is brimming with vibrant characters, courageous quests, daring discoveries, and many bold stands for equality and justice. While most Alabamians are well acquainted with the more famous tales, some of the unexpected facts and lesser known details often remain overlooked. The *Alabama Bicentennial PastPort* invites you to embark on a statewide adventure that delves into a deep discovery of the sites where state-shaping events took place. This immersive journey ties together 67 counties and 200 years of history to vividly capture the true spirit of our people and the full, fascinating story of the land we love. Join us on this adventurous, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to unlock mysteries, spark imagination, and ignite curious exploration into who we are today, how we came to be, and what we hope to become.
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MAKE SURE TO

STAMP YOUR BOOK

Hop in your car.
See a county site.
Stamp your book.
Keep exploring.
The Black Belt sprawls across south-central Alabama, stretching west into Mississippi. Our region is famous for fertile soils, dark pasts, vibrant folklife, Greek Revival mansions, and civil rights crusades. Long ago, lust for cotton lands consumed planters and ignited a land rush known as “Alabama Fever.” Settlers raced in to claim newly opened territory. Enslaved people worked hard to build cotton empires starting with only sacks of raw seed. Great riches grew from the dirt. And Montgomery, Selma, and Demopolis blossomed as some of the wealthiest places on earth. A handful of politicians wielded power in our state’s first and final capitals, while struggles for liberty spread across the nation. Today, our legacy as freedom fighters, social justice giants, and pilots continues to influence the world.
Selma is the butterfly capital of Alabama. There are about 150 species of butterflies in the state. Look for swallowtails, little yellows, painted ladies, and other colorful butterflies flitting through local gardens.

Dallas County is the dramatic setting of state-shaping and world-changing moments. All eyes were on Selma as hundreds of peaceful protesters courageously marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and were met with violence at the hands of law enforcement. Bloody Sunday and the march to Montgomery that followed bolstered national support for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a law that forever changed the nation. Dallas County has always been an influential force. In the 1820s, Alabama’s first state capital arose from its vast wilderness. Cahawba was once a beautiful, bustling city. In 1825, fine ladies and gentleman entertained a famous Revolutionary War hero, France’s Marquis de Lafayette, with extravagant balls and elaborate gatherings there. Now a ghost town, families can explore a treasure trove of archaeological ruins on foot or along the Old Cahawba bike trail.
Alabama women are social justice leaders, famous novelists, award-winning actresses, military heroes, politicians, and world changers who dedicate their lives to empowering others. Celebrate their many achievements at the Alabama Women’s Hall of Fame in Marion.
Macon County has a history of breaking down racial barriers. The first African American pilots in the U.S. Armed Forces trained in Tuskegee and paved the way for integration in the U.S. military. Airmen in the 332nd Fighter Group were nicknamed the "Red Tails." They fiercely protected American bombers from German fighter planes and became one of the country’s most decorated fighter groups in World War II. Their legacy is celebrated at the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site. Nearby, Tuskegee University was founded by Booker T. Washington. He was born into slavery, but emerged as one of America’s leading educators. Decades later, five-time Grammy Award winner Lionel Richie was born here. He attended Tuskegee University and played the saxophone for the Commodores before starting a solo singing career. See the spot where "Brick House" was recorded at the Commodore Museum.

The Tuskegee Airmen, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and many other heroes left enduring legacies in Tuskegee. Discover their worldwide impact at the Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site.
**MARENGO COUNTY**  Black Belt

**Frenchmen. Plantations. Leaders.**

Marengo County is the colorful setting of rags-to-riches stories and tall tales. On March 3, 1817, the same day the Alabama Territory was created, Congress granted land for the Vine and Olive Colony in Marengo County. Early storytellers and history books romanticized the colony’s settlers as a band of French soldiers and aristocrats exiled for their loyalty to Napoleon. But actually most of them were merchants fleeing a slave uprising in Haiti. While their plan to grow olives and grapes did not succeed and they moved on, the French left their mark here. Gaineswood, one of the finest models of Greek Revival architecture, and other historic homes still grace the landscape that once made cotton king. Civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy and business leader A. G. Gaston were both born in this area. Visit the Marengo County Museum to learn how this county’s history unfolded.

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**GREENE COUNTY**  Black Belt

**Land. Greek Revival. Bluesman.**

Greene County’s history is largely defined by the lay of the land. The fertile soil results from a geological feature called the Eutaw Formation. This mineral-rich vein underlies parts of Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi and contains ancient fossils, including dinosaurs and sea-dwelling mosasaurs. The formation is named for the city of Eutaw because most of it surfaces there. Wealthy planters once built sprawling plantations in this area and crowned them with Greek Revival mansions. Many of these antebellum beauties survived the Civil War. In the 20th century, Forkland native Bobo Jenkins ran away from home and eventually settled in Detroit. He spent many years writing blues songs on automotive assembly lines before starting Big Star Records. Today, visitors can drive by Bird’s Hay Bale Art Farm, or slow down to marvel over the magnificent antebellum homes that still stand.
OUR STATE'S EARLY ECONOMY WAS BUILT ON COTTON. AT OUR PEAK, WE PRODUCED NEARLY ONE MILLION BALES OF COTTON IN A YEAR AND EXPORTED HALF OF THE COTTON GROWN IN THE U.S.
Bullock County is home to Union Springs, the “Bird Dog Field Trial Capital of the World.” Outdoorsmen from far and wide bring their best dogs to compete in yearly field trials. The bird dogs sniff out quail while their handlers follow behind on horseback. It’s a fierce competition, as the dogs go neck and neck to track down the most birds. Some sportsmen bag lots of quail, while others pony up for fox hunts. This county’s love for the great outdoors goes way back. The people of Chunnenuggee Ridge founded the nation’s oldest public garden club in the 1840s, and it’s still thriving today. Breezy gardens once surrounded old plantation homes. Virginia Foster Durr, a famous activist, used to describe her family’s mansion as the “Garden of Eden.” Later, she spoke up for African Americans and poor whites who were denied the right to vote. Visit the area’s lush lands, or see the Bird Dog Field Trial Monument in Union Springs.

Eddie Kendricks, lead singer and cofounder of The Temptations, was born in Union Springs. He sang the lead in “Just My Imagination” and other unforgettable hits. His 1960’s soul music is still widely popular.
BLACK AND WHITE HEROES FOUGHT FOR EQUALITY TO GIVE ALL PEOPLE A BRIGHTLY FUTURE.
Generations of women in Wilcox County are stitched together through quilts. The quilting tradition was passed down from the antebellum days when their ancestors were enslaved. Made out of make-do materials and a will-do spirit, the later quilts of Gee’s Bend are a testament to the community’s perseverance and creativity. The Alabama River winds through the area, and during the civil rights era, county officials shut down the ferry that connects Gee’s Bend to Camden in an effort to exclude black voters. An electric, state-of-the-art ferry now carries passengers across the river. Just down the road, visitors can explore a turn-of-the-century railroad town that was once prosperous. The city of Pine Apple thrived when most surrounding areas were in economic decline. See more than 70 structures in the Pine Apple Historic District, or wander through Black Belt Treasures in Camden.

The treasured Gee’s Bend quilts travel the country in museum exhibits and are celebrated as iconic pieces of modern art. Explore the Gee’s Bend Quilt Mural Trail, or see artists in action at the Gee’s Bend Quilters Collective.
Montgomery County is the birthplace of revolutionary events that forever changed the nation. In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give her bus seat to white passengers, leading to a boycott and legal action that started the civil rights movement. A century before, the telegram that launched the Civil War was sent from Montgomery, and for a time, the city served as the capital of the Confederacy. President Jefferson Davis lived in the First White House of the Confederacy, a home built by ancestors of Montgomery native Zelda Fitzgerald. The wife and muse of author F. Scott Fitzgerald, Zelda is famous in her own right for being a beautiful free spirit and larger-than-life icon of the Jazz Age. Learn more about her life at the Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum. Pay a visit to the Rosa Parks Museum, Museum of Alabama, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and the historic state capitol on “Goat Hill.”

World-famous jazz musician Nat King Cole was born in Montgomery. His family moved north during the Great Migration. But today, his music is celebrated with a mural downtown and a marker at his childhood home.
**Lowndes County**  Black Belt

**Folk Art. Okra. Black Power.**

Lowndes County is a homegrown kind of place where self-taught artists, okra gardens, and grassroots campaigns thrive. Famous artist Bill Traylor was born into slavery on a local plantation long ago. After a lifetime in the fields, his creativity blossomed, taking shape in more than 1,000 drawings and paintings. He brought colorful characters to life on scraps of salvaged cardboard. Today, his whimsical art hangs in fine museums. Locals savor other Southern works of art come summertime. Home cooks whip up crispy fried, slow-roasted, and sizzling hot okra dishes for the Okra Festival in Burkville. Food brings people together where inequality once caused deep divides. The state excluded black voters from elections, so they rallied to form a new political party with a black panther symbol. Explore their legacy at the Lowndes Interpretive Center.

**Sumter County**  Black Belt

**New World. Folklorists. Radical Reforms.**

The people of Sumter County are caretakers of centuries-old history. In the 1700s, French explorers built a fort near the Tombigbee River. Fort Tombecbe gave the French a foothold in the New World before their British rivals seized control. The outpost crumbled long ago, but archaeologists are unearthing colonial treasures there today. Nearby in Livingston, a local artist spent years preserving cultural gems. Ruby Tartt collected rare folk songs passed down from enslaved people. She introduced Vera Hall and other singers to famous folklorist John Lomax. Together they captured hundreds of blues songs, most famously Vera Hall’s “Another Man Done Gone.” Julia Tutwiler changed the tune of higher education. She championed women’s rights and was instrumental in founding the University of West Alabama. Learn more local history at the Museum of the Black Belt.
Big catfish are always jumpin’ in Hale County. In the 1960s, a group of locals invested in catfish fisheries, and the industry went wild. Their contributions helped revamp the economy of west Alabama. These days, the county is a quiet fishing and farming community, but it was once a bustling political and religious center for Native Americans. Moundville was one of the most powerful prehistoric communities in North America. Today, the park is a National Historic Landmark and includes original mounds, a reconstructed village, museum, research center, trails, and campground. There is also a rich antebellum history here, with structures predating the Civil War. St. Andrews Episcopal Church was completed in 1854 in the Gothic Revival style and designed by New York architect Richard Upjohn. Visit Magnolia Grove, Moundville Archaeological Park, or Rural Studio.

*Auburn’s Rural Studio is based in Newbern and rebuilds communities in the Black Belt. Recently, students renovated the Safe House Black History Museum where Martin Luther King Jr. once hid from local Klansmen.*
PERRY COUNTY  Black Belt


Heroines of Perry County carried out bold missions for equality and justice all over the world. The great Coretta Scott King, wife of Martin Luther King Jr., grew up near Marion. She bravely stood for human rights in the midst of death threats and her husband’s murder. World leaders sought her counsel on political affairs, and through her efforts, Martin Luther King Jr. Day is now a national holiday. Other local women played pivotal roles in achieving equal rights. Juanita Abernathy and Jean Childs Young marched on the frontlines in Selma. Later, Young became an international leader in the fight for children’s rights. Here, strong women define the past and help shape the future. The “College City” of Marion is a center for female education. Tour Marion Female Seminary, or celebrate women’s achievements in the Alabama Women’s Hall of Fame at Judson College.

RUSSELL COUNTY  Black Belt

Russell County transports explorers into a curious world of duels, genius engineers, and mythical monsters. Long ago, militiamen journeyed deep into the Creek Nation. On the crossroads of a busy trade route, they built a stockade known as Fort Mitchell. The fort evolved, taking on many roles, from a base camp for war and deadly dueling grounds to a rowdy roadside tavern. Time swept the fort away, but a replica stands there today. Nearby, the Chattahoochee River meanders past Phenix City, where a brilliant ex-slave built massive bridges across the waterway. Horace King’s bridges reassured nervous travelers of safe passage. According to Creek legends, giant sea monsters lurked below the surface waiting to carry people into watery underworlds never to return. Travel on an unforgettable journey at the Chattahoochee Indian Heritage Center.
STAMP SITE LOCATIONS

Bullock County
Red Door Theatre
Union Springs

Dallas County
Old Cahawba Archaeological Park
Orrville
Ancient Africa, Enslavement,
and Civil War Museum
Selma
National Voting Rights Museum
and Institute
Selma
Old Depot Museum
Selma
Selma Interpretive Center
Selma
Sturdivant Hall Museum
Selma
Smitherman Museum
Selma

Greene County
SCLC Magnolia House
Eutaw
Alabama Civil Rights
Freedom Farm Museum
Eutaw

Hale County
Safe House Black History Museum
Greensboro
Magnolia Grove
Greensboro
Moundville Archaeological Park
Moundville

Lowndes County
Lowndes Interpretive Center
Hayneville

Macon County
Booker T. Washington House (The Oaks)
Tuskegee
Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site
Tuskegee
Commodore Museum
Tuskegee
George Washington Carver Museum
Tuskegee
Legacy Museum at Tuskegee University
Tuskegee
Tuskegee History Center
Tuskegee

Marengo County
Bluff Hall
Demopolis
Gaineswood National Historic Landmark
Demopolis
Marengo County History
and Archive Museum
Demopolis
Rooster Hall
Demopolis

Montgomery County
Alabama State Capitol
Montgomery
Civil Rights Memorial Center
Montgomery
Governor’s Mansion
Montgomery
Old Alabama Town
Montgomery
Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist
Church & Parsonage Museum
Montgomery
First White House of the Confederacy
Montgomery
Freedom Rides Museum in the Historic
Montgomery Greyhound Bus Station
Montgomery
Hank Williams Museum
Montgomery
Museum of Alabama
Montgomery
Rosa Parks Museum
Montgomery
Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum
Montgomery
Perry County
Lincoln School
Marion
Moore–Webb–Holmes Plantation
Marion
Alabama Women’s Hall of Fame
Marion
Reverie Historic Home
Marion
Alabama Military Hall of Fame
Marion
Russell County
Fort Mitchell Museum
Fort Mitchell
Chattahoochee Indian Heritage Center
Fort Mitchell

Sumter County
Spence-Moon House
Livingston

Wilcox County
Gee’s Bend Quilt Mural Trail
Gee’s Bend
Gaines Ridge
Camden
Wilcox Female Institute
Camden
Gee’s Bend Ferry
Camden
Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center
Camden

OTHER SITES TO SEE

Bullock County
Bird Dog Statue
Union Springs

Sumter County
Alamuchee-Bellamy Covered Bridge
Livingston

Discover more stamp sites on the PastPort app. Download it to your mobile device to find more information for your cross-county adventures in Alabama.
THE ALABAMA BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION
is pleased to bring you the Alabama Bicentennial PastPort. It is a once-in-a-lifetime gift to the students and citizens of our state. Many thanks to our corporate sponsors – Mercedes-Benz, Verizon, Airbus, and Alabama NewsCenter – for their tremendous generosity and support and to the institutions and individuals who have graciously granted access to historical images and artwork used throughout the piece. For a full list of contributors, please visit the Alabama PastPort app.

Happy exploring!