

The Yellowhammer State

Established 1819

22nd State

EXTREMES

Coldest: The coldest recorded temperature was -27°F (-33°C) at New Market in 1966.

Hottest: The hottest day ever recorded was in Centerville in 1925 when it hit 112°F (44°C).

Highest: The highest point, Cheaha Mountain, is 2,407 feet (734 m) tall.

Lowest: Sea level is the lowest elevation in the state.



Did You Know?

- One of the largest motorcycle museums in the United States is located in Birmingham.
- The town of Enterprise has a monument to the boll weevil, a beetle that killed 90 percent of the cotton harvest in 1915.
- Northern Alabama, along with parts of Georgia and Tennessee, almost became a separate state before the Civil War. It was going to be called Nick-a-Jack.
- George Washington Carver, a former slave who became a research scientist, discovered three hundred uses for peanuts, including peanut butter!
- The Marshall Space Center in Huntsville is where scientists developed the rocket that took U.S. astronauts to the moon.
- Montgomery was the first capital of the Confederacy during the Civil War.
- Four species of poisonous snakes live in Alabama: rattlesnake, coral snake, water moccasin, and copperhead.
- A world-record 111-pound blue catfish was caught in Lake Wheeler in 1996.

The Place

Climate

Alabama doesn't often get very cold. In winter, the temperature might range from 40° F to 50°F (4–10°C), but there are occasional frosts and even snow in the northern mountains. In summer, a mild 80°F (27°C) is average. Along the coast, sea breezes from the Gulf of Mexico help cool things down. Alabama stays green because it receives almost 60 inches (152 cm) of rain each year. On occasion, hurricanes blast the coast or tornadoes touch down inland.

Geography



Alabama is diverse: you can find swamps and alligators in one place and pine-covered hills and black bears in another. The short piece of coast (52 miles, or 83 km) has sandy beaches and swampy wetlands. This is the edge of the Gulf Coastal Plain, a flat region covering much of the state. As the Plain goes north, it gets hilly and runs into the Appalachian Mountains in the northeast. In the middle of the Plain lies the Black Belt, where the rich soil is perfect for farming. Alabama also has many big rivers. Barges and boats travel along some of these rivers to transport goods across the state. From north to south, Alabama runs 321 miles (530 km); from east to west it runs 210 miles (338 km). All told, Alabama covers 52,423 square miles (135,775 sq km).

Resources and Economy



Alabama's economy relies on agriculture, including cotton, soybeans, peanuts, pecans, and sweet potatoes. Dairy and poultry products are important as well. Abundant timber (forests cover 67 percent of Alabama) provides paper and wood products. More than one hundred tree species can be found, including bamboo. Water is everywhere, and Alabamians use it for crops and farming, for boating and fishing, and for hydroelectric power. Water also cools Alabama's five nuclear power plants. Scientific research in the state helps improve medical and aerospace technology. In manufacturing, Alabamians produce plastics, paper products, textiles, and automobiles. Iron and steel are also important industries in the state. Oil is found on the Gulf Coast.

History

Time Line

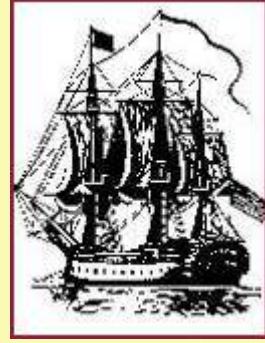
6000 B.C.

6000 B.C. First-known inhabitants of Alabama possess the land

A.D. 1200

A.D. 1200 The Mound Builder society is based on corn and trade

1519 The Spanish arrive in Mobile Bay



1540 Hernando de Soto explores the territory

1700

1702 The French found Fort Louis de la Mobile, the first permanent settlement

1763 The British gain control of the territory in the 1763 Treaty of Paris



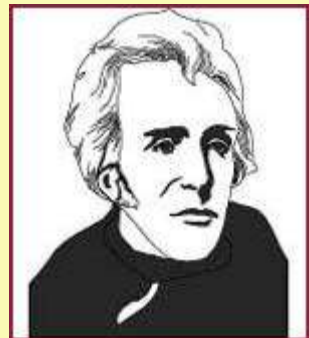
1783 The United States gains control after the American Revolution

1800

1800 American settlers seeking fertile land move to Alabama



1814 Andrew Jackson fights in the intertribal Creek War



1819 Alabama becomes the 22nd state

1861 Montgomery is made the first capital of the Confederacy in the Civil War



1864	Union troops capture Mobile Bay	
1881	The Tuskegee Institution for African-Americans is founded by Booker T. Washington	
1900		
1917	Alabamas's food and cotton is needed for World War I	
1933	During the Great Depression, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) helps provide jobs	
1939	Alabama becomes a space and military research center	
1955	Rosa Park's civil disobedience leads to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling	
1963	Governor George Wallace tries to stop African-American students from attending college	
1965	The Freedom March from Selma to Montgomery declares the need for voting rights legislation	
1985	The 234-mile Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway is completed	
PRESENT		

Early Alabamians

The earliest inhabitants of Alabama lived in caves thousands of years ago. Later, around A.D. 1200, a group called the Mound Builders left large burial mounds in southeastern Alabama. These people lived in small communities but traded with other Native Americans. Some think they were the ancestors to the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Creek—four important tribes that made Alabama their home. They tried to get along with white settlers but eventually had to fight for their land. Sometimes they fought each other. In the early 1800s, many Creek were forced to move to a small piece of eastern Alabama. By 1850, most tribes had left the state.

Spanish, French, English, American

In 1540, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto took five hundred men into Alabama looking for gold; however, he didn't find any. Tristán de Luna settled an area near Mobile but soon left it.



France explored the Mississippi River, claimed it, and built forts to defend it. In 1702, Pierre and Jean Le Moyne, two French Canadian brothers, founded Fort Louis on what is today's Mobile River. England went to war with France over its lands in America. France lost and gave up its territory to England in the 1763 Treaty of Paris. In 1783, England lost the Revolutionary War, and the United States took control of Alabama.

Cotton and the Civil War



Some early white settlers in Alabama created big farms, called plantations, to grow cotton. Most of the settlers used African slaves to plow, plant, and harvest. Because many people made money from cotton, it was called King Cotton. With the invention of a machine to take the seeds out of cotton, farming began to expand even more. When the North tried to outlaw slavery, Alabama and other Southern states left the United States and started a new country: the Confederate States of America. Since Alabama is in the heart of the South, Montgomery became the new capital. During the Civil War, the state's biggest battle was a naval one—the battle of Mobile Bay, in 1864. Mobile was the last major city of the South to surrender. The war destroyed much of Alabama.

Tennessee Valley Authority

Alabama already had a lot of poor people when the Great Depression hit in 1929. The Depression made everyone even poorer. The government, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, developed a program to help create jobs, electricity, and more water for farmers and industries. It was called the TVA, or the Tennessee Valley Authority. One of its jobs was building dams and locks on the Tennessee River. Locks are like elevators for boats: locks can move boats from a low water level to a high one, or vice versa. This system of dams and locks protected Alabama from terrible floods, and still does!

The Civil Rights Movement

Alabama's African-Americans played key roles in the Civil Rights Movement, which led to national and state laws treating all citizens fairly. In the 1950s and '60s, *Jim Crow laws* (laws



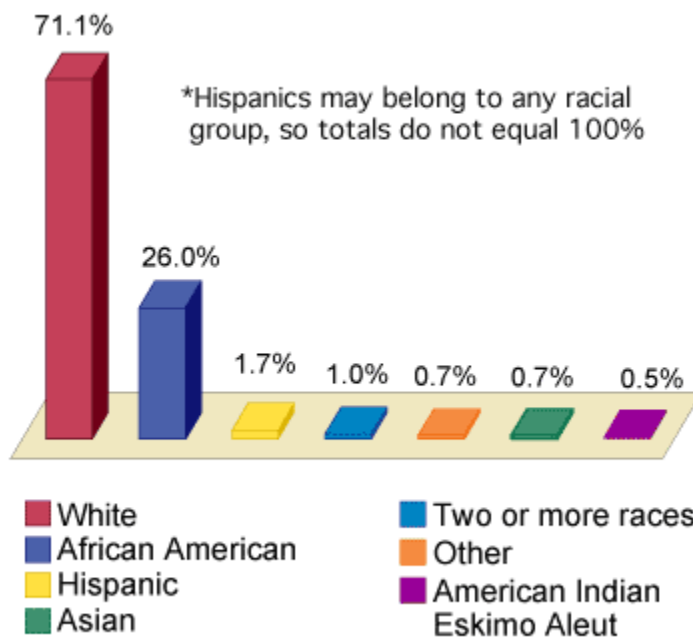
preventing African-Americans from voting or having equal rights) provoked discontent. Rosa Parks, an African-American woman in Montgomery, refused to give up her seat in the “colored” section of a bus for a white man. She was arrested. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a minister, led other African-Americans to *boycott* (or refuse to use) the bus system for a whole year. In 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Alabama could not make white and black people ride on different parts of a bus.

The People

Population

Alabama’s population is growing only slightly. Almost three-quarters of the people are white. Most of the rest are African-American. Few Alabamians were born overseas. Most descend from early settlers or from slaves. Until 30 years ago, many Alabamians farmed or raised animals. Today, most folks live in cities, and Birmingham is the biggest one. Many rural counties are shrinking because people go to the cities to find jobs and escape poverty.

Total Population: 4,486,508



Government

Capital: Montgomery

U.S. Senators: 2

U.S. Representatives: 7

Counties: 67

- Not all cities have the same kind of government. Some have mayors and some have managers.
- Alabama casts nine electoral votes in U.S. presidential elections.

Famous People

- *Booker T. Washington* — Author, educator, and former slave
- *George Wallace* — Controversial four-term governor
- *Hank Aaron* — World record holder for home runs (755)
- *Hank Williams* — Country music songwriter and performer
- *Harper Lee* — Author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- *Helen Keller* — Deaf and blind writer and speaker
- *Jesse Owens* — Track-and-field legend
- *Nat King Cole* — Jazz pianist and singer
- *Rosa Parks* — Civil rights activist
- *Willie Mays* — An all-time great baseball player

Fun Facts & Contacts

State Symbols

State Bird

Yellowhammer—This common flicker is a colorful woodpecker.



State Flower

Camellia—This flower comes from Asia and blooms most of the year.



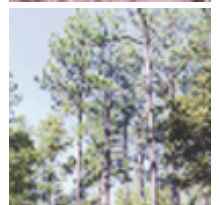
State Horse

Racking horse—The Alabama legislature chose this animal as the state horse in 1975. The racking horse walks rapidly and smoothly.



State Tree

Southern longleaf pine—It can grow to 150 feet (46 m) tall.



Cultural Note

One of the most important roots of rock and roll and



modern jazz is the blues. The blues is a kind of music that grew out of the experience of slavery. Slaves often sang while they worked in the fields. Hollers, chants, and other kinds of songs from Africa were common. William Christopher (W. C.) Handy, as a young black man in Florence, Alabama, used to hear such work songs. Later, as a musician, he mixed those songs with music for orchestra. He called this *the blues* because the songs were often about sadness and despair. One of his most famous songs is called "The St. Louis Blues." Today, W. C. Handy is often called "the father of the blues."

For More Information

See www.alabama.gov or contact the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel, PO Box 4927, Montgomery, AL 36103; phone (800) ALABAMA; web site www.touralabama.org.

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Axiom Press, Inc.
333 South 520 West, Suite 360
Lindon, Utah 84042 USA
1.800.528.6279; 801.932.6459
fax 801.847.0127
www.culturegrams.com

