



# Alabama

## State History

~ In a Nutshell ~

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Alabama State History In a Nutshell  
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### **What is the "In a Nutshell" series?**

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.

# Alabama State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide

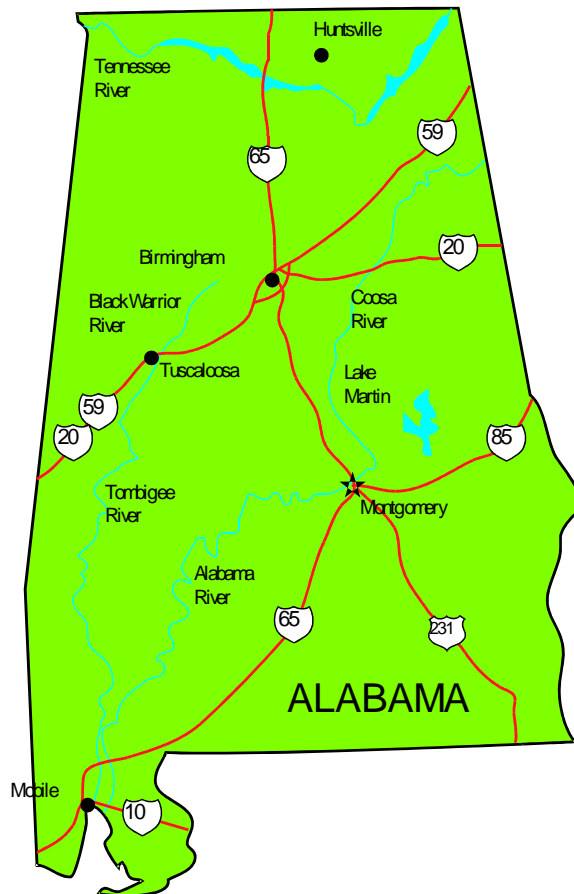


Great Seal of Alabama

The state of Alabama was named after the Alabama River. The river was named by early European explorers after the Indian tribe that lived in the territory and first appeared in 1540 spelled as "Alibamu", "Alibamo" and even "Limamu" in the journals of the Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto (c.1500-1542).

The origin of the name Alabama is thought to come from a combination of two Choctaw words; Alba and Amo. In Choctaw, "Alba" means vegetation, herbs, plants and "Amo" means gatherer or picker. "Vegetation gatherers" would be an apt description for the Alabama Indians who cleared much land for agricultural purposes.

People who live in Alabama or who come from Alabama are called Alabamans or Alabamians.



Map of Alabama – Capital, Major Lakes and Rivers

**STATEHOOD:** Alabama's birth as a territory and road to statehood began with a series of treaties and occupations involving, at various times, Great Britain, France, Spain and the United States of America.

With the establishment of the Mississippi Territory in 1798, present-day Alabama began to take shape. In 1812, Congress added the Mobile area to the Mississippi Territory claiming that it was part of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase from France. Spain disagreed, but in 1813, the United States forcefully occupied the district with no resistance from Spain.

Alabama was part of the Mississippi Territory until 1817 when the United States Congress divided the territory into two parts. The western part, Mississippi, was granted statehood and the eastern part became the Alabama Territory. William Wyatt Bibb was appointed as the Territorial Governor and St. Stephens was named as the Territorial Capital.

Most of the first settlers in Alabama came on ships landing in Mobile bay. Towns initially grew along the rivers north of Mobile but as settlers began to arrive from Tennessee, South Carolina and Georgia, towns began to form in northern Alabama until, by 1819, Huntsville had become the largest settlement.

On January 19, 1818, the first legislature of the Alabama Territory, presided over by Governor William Wyatt Bibb, met in the Douglas Hotel in St. Stephens.

On March 2, 1819, the nation's fifth President, James Monroe signed an enabling act paving the way for Alabama to enter the Union and on July 5th, 44 elected Alabamans met in Huntsville to write a constitution and prepare for statehood. From the 5th through August 2, 1819, the delegates hammered out Alabama's 1819 Constitution.

In September of the same year, Alabama's first constitutional election was held and Territorial Governor William Wyatt Bibb was elected as Alabama's first State Governor. On October 25th, the newly elected Alabama General Assembly met at Huntsville and elected William Rufus King and John W. Walker as Alabama's first United States Senators.

On December 14, 1819, Alabama became the 22nd state to enter the Union.

**STATE CONSTITUTION:** From 1819 to 1901, Alabama has adopted and operated under six different constitutions, each providing the state with an operating framework suited to the time of adoption.

The 1819 Constitution was created under the rules set out by the United States Congress in the Enabling Act of March 2, 1819. Among other things, this act set the guidelines by which Alabama could achieve statehood and specified that delegate elections were to be held in May, 1819 for a Constitutional Convention to be convened in Huntsville on July 5 of the same year. This was the constitution that led to Alabama's statehood.

By 1861, relationships between slave-holding states and the others of the Union were stressed. The Constitutional Convention of 1861, called the "Secession Convention," concerned itself with Alabama's withdrawal from the Union of the United States. The 1861 Constitution of the Secession Convention was ratified by the convention on March 20. This constitution was adopted as one that would provide governmental frameworks for Alabama after withdrawal from the Union.

The third Alabama Constitution, the 1865 Constitution, was declared as Alabama reunited with the Union at the end of the Civil War. After a series of proclamations, including an Amnesty Proclamation from President Andrew Johnson, a Constitutional Convention convened at Montgomery and adopted a post-war constitution on September 12, 1865 intended to provide for the state as it rejoined the Union.

As a result of the 1867 Reconstruction Acts of the United States Congress, the territories of the 11 "rebel states" were divided into military districts and made subject to military authority. These acts were adopted by Congress over vetoes by President Johnson "to provide for the more efficient government of the rebel States." The second of these acts directed the states to "cause a registration to be made of the male citizens of the United States, twenty-one years of age and upwards" and to collect oaths of loyalty to the United States. It further instructed that an "election shall be held of delegates to a convention for the purpose of establishing a constitution and civil government for such State loyal to the Union..." The Reconstruction Acts led to the adoption of the 1868 Constitution.

On March 19, 1875, the Alabama General Assembly called for another Constitutional Convention to be held "the first Monday in September, 1875 for the purpose taking into consideration the constitution of this State, and revising and amending the same in the particulars wherein said constitution appears to require amendment." The 1875 Constitution became the first Alabama Constitution to be voted on and adopted by the citizens of the state.

The 1901 Constitution, laid the framework that governs Alabama today. It was the sixth constitution adopted by the state. Amendments to the 1901 Constitution have risen to over 740 making it the longest constitution in the country.

The constitution provides ways to amend or adjust it as necessary. Changes, in the form of amendments, may be initiated in the Alabama General Assembly or a Constitutional Convention may be called to enact changes.

Constitutional amendments, when originating in the Legislature, must be approved by 3/5 of the members of each house and then by a majority of the citizens of the state. A Constitutional Convention, for the purposes of amending or altering the Constitution, may be called by a majority vote in each of the houses of the legislature and must be approved by a majority of the citizens of the state. Acts or resolutions regarding the Alabama Constitution that are approved in the legislature are not submitted to the Governor of the state for his or her approval. In addition, a Constitutional Amendment may not change the basis of representation in the legislature, which is based on population.

**PREAMBLE:** *We, the people of the State of Alabama, in order to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, invoking the favor and guidance of Almighty God, do ordain and establish the following Constitution and form of government for the State of Alabama:*

**STATE GOVERNMENT:** As in the case of the federal government, Alabama's state government is organized into three branches - executive, legislative, and judicial. The state government is a product of three documents: the United States Constitution, the Alabama State Constitution, and laws of the state.

The Governor of Alabama is the chief executive officer of the state and is elected by citizens for a four-year term and may serve for two consecutive terms. He or she is responsible for

appointing certain state officers, veto or approval of bills passed by the Legislature, granting pardons and paroles, calling special sessions of the legislature, and commands the state militia. The Governor is also responsible for the preparation of the state budget, and ensures that all laws are obeyed in the state.

The Alabama State Legislature is the lawmaking branch of the state government. The Legislature has the authority to pass laws that people must obey. The Legislature is also responsible for raising and distributing the money necessary to run the state government. Senators and Representatives are elected by citizens to terms of four years

The judicial branch of the Alabama Government interprets the laws. The Alabama Court System is made up of the Supreme Court, the highest court, and is presided over by a chief justice and eight associate judges. There are two intermediate courts, the Court of Criminal Appeals, with five judges and the Court of Civil Appeals with three judges. A series of Circuit Courts serve as the major trial courts. There are 40 Circuit Courts in Alabama. All justices and judges, with the exception of municipal court judges, are elected by the qualified voters of a respective court's jurisdiction for six-year terms.

## STATE CAPITAL

- Location: Montgomery, Date Erected:1850-1851, 1885, 1906, 1912, 1992
- The first capitol, built in Montgomery in 1847, burned down in 1849.
- The current capitol, built in the Greek Revival style, was constructed on the same site in 1850-1851.
- Jefferson Davis was sworn in as President of the Confederate States of America at the capitol on Feb. 18, 1861.
- A star on the capitol steps commemorates the Davis inauguration.
- A rear wing was added in 1885 and two side wings were added in 1906 and 1912.
- A rear extension, with portico, was added in 1992.
- The Alabama State Capitol was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1962



The Alabama Legislature, referred to as the General Assembly, is composed of two bodies, called houses, like the United States Congress. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Legislature is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Legislature is responsible for making the laws in Alabama and for raising and distributing the money necessary to run the state government.

**STATE REPRESENTATIVES:** Representatives in Alabama each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called house districts. There are currently 105 men and women representing 105 house districts in the Alabama House of Representatives. Each representative serves for a period of four years in the House of Representatives, after which he or she must run for re-election.

**STATE SENATORS:** Senators in Alabama each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called senate districts. There are currently 35 men and women representing 35 senate districts in the Alabama Senate. Each senator serves for a period of four years in the Senate, after which he or she must run for re-election.

For the names of current state government officials go to:  
[http://www.netstate.com/states/government/al\\_government.htm](http://www.netstate.com/states/government/al_government.htm)

**U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION:** The legislative branch of the United States government makes laws for our nation and raises and distributes money to run the United States government. The most evident part of the legislative branch is the United States Congress. Congress is divided into two parts, called houses. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms. Members of the Senate are called Senators and members of the House of Representatives are called Representatives. Senators and representatives serving in these two bodies are sometimes referred to as congressmen, or women, and sometimes as legislators because their business is to legislate or make laws. The role of the legislative branch is defined in the United States Constitution.

Each state elects people to represent them in the United States Congress in Washington, DC. The citizens of each state elect two senators to represent them in the Senate. They also elect representatives to represent them in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state sends to the House of Representatives is not a specific number like the Senate, but is based on the population of the state. The people, that are elected to represent the state's citizens in the United States Congress, are referred to as the congressional delegation.

There are 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. Each is elected to a term, in the Senate, of six years. There are 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each is elected to a term, in the "House," of two years.

The citizens of Alabama elect two people, like every other state, to represent them in the Senate and seven people, based on Alabama's population, to represent them in the House of Representatives.

**STATE MOTTO:** "*Audemus jura nostra defendere*" is the motto of the state of Alabama with an intended English translation of "We Dare Maintain Our Rights."

## **STATE FLAG**

Though Alabama entered the Union in 1819, it wasn't until the state seceded from the Union in 1861 that Alabamans adopted a flag of their own. At the Secession Convention of January 11, 1861, distressed Alabama citizens decided to withdraw from the Union of the United States. At the same time, they adopted their own flag. Designed by a group of Montgomery women, the "Secession Convention Flag" became Alabama's first official flag. Because Alabama had left the union, the flag was often referred to as the "Republic of Alabama flag."

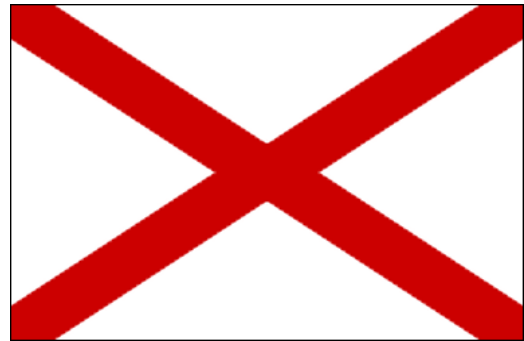
The Republic of Alabama flag did not fly long. On February 10, 1861, one month after it was adopted, the flag was damaged in a severe storm and was moved to the Governor's office, never to fly over Alabama again.

Without a flag of their own, Alabamans rallied under the flags of the Confederate States of America. From March 4, 1861 until April, 1865 one of two Confederate National Flags waved over Alabama soil.

After the war, the flag of the United States was raised over the state. It flew until 1891 when Alabama finally decided on a design for a unique state flag.

Four years later, on February 16, 1895, 76 years after being admitted to the Union, the Alabama Legislature authorized the "crimson cross of St. Andrew on a field of white" as its official flag in the *Acts of Alabama*. Reminiscent of the Confederate battle flag, it was designated that the crimson bars were not to be less than six inches broad and were to extend diagonally across the flag. Because Act 383 did not specify a particular format, the flag is sometimes depicted as a square and at other times depicted as a rectangle.

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## STATE NICKNAMES

### *The Heart of Dixie*

Alabama has no official state nickname, but "The Heart of Dixie" is prevalent and reflects the central role that Alabama played in the history of the South. "The Heart of Dixie" was a phrase developed in the 1940s and 1950s by the Alabama Chamber of Commerce. Alabama was commonly referred to as the "Cotton State" but so were many other southern states. The Chamber sought a more distinctive slogan for their state and promoted that "Alabama is geographically the Heart of Dixie, Alabama is industrially the Heart of Dixie, Alabama is, in fact, the Heart of Dixie." In 1951, with backing from the Alabama Chamber of Commerce, the Alabama Legislature passed a bill to add "Heart of Dixie" to automobile license plates. In 1955, the first license plate bearing the new slogan was produced.

Subsequent standard-issue license plates have been adorned with slogans such as "Stars Fell on Alabama" and, as of 2009, "Sweet Home Alabama."

### *The Yellowhammer State*

This nickname "The Yellowhammer State" originated during the Civil War. A couple of suggestions as to the origination of the nickname have been presented. One suggestion states that the name was inspired by the gray uniforms of Confederate soldiers that had a yellow tinge to them because they were "home-dyed." Another states that a company of soldiers paraded in uniforms that were trimmed with yellow cloth. Either way, the Alabama soldiers reminded people of Yellowhammers, birds with yellow patches under their wings.



## *The Cotton State*

Cotton production in Alabama was a major influence in the growth and culture of the state. While many southern states were referred to as Cotton Plantation States, Alabama was singled out as the “Cotton State” because of its central location in the Cotton Belt. Cotton was Alabama's leading crop and Alabama was considered a leading cotton producer. Alabama ranked 11th for cotton cash receipts in 2004.

## *The Lizard State*

An abundance of lizards along Alabama streams, in early times, led to this nickname.

## **STATE BIRD**



The Yellow-hammer became the official bird of Alabama when the legislation was signed by Governor David Bibb Graves on September 6, 1927. It is most often referred to today as the northern flicker, common flicker or simply flicker. Yellow-hammer is more often spelled Yellowhammer.

According to George Earlie Shankle, Ph.D.,

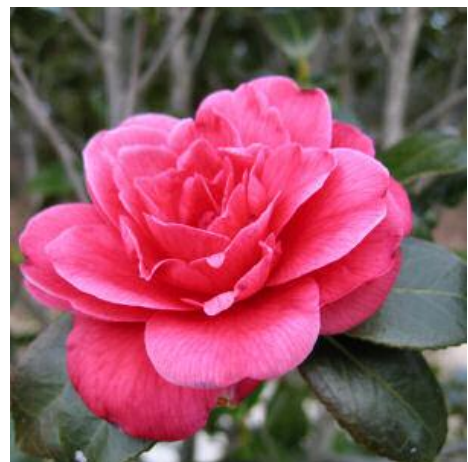
"The members of the above-named legislative body officially selected this bird as the avian emblem of Alabama because the cavalrymen of the Confederate Army wore gray uniforms trimmed with yellow, the colors of the Yellowhammer having suggested these gray and yellow uniforms."

The northern flicker, is a woodpecker with strong claws for climbing, a stiff tail for maintaining balance and for leverage, and a hard chisel-like bill for boring into wood for insects.

## **STATE FLOWER**

The Goldenrod was the official state flower of Alabama from September 6, 1927–August 26, 1959. The ladies of Butler County were not fond of the Goldenrod however and considered it undeserving in its role as state flower. It was a wildflower after all, little more than a weed they thought. They thought Camellias more appropriate as a state representative. On August 26, 1959, the Goldenrod was replaced by the Camellia as Alabama's official State flower.

Because there are several types of Camellia, in June 1999, the Alabama Legislature agreed to specifically name *Camellia Japonica* as the official State flower.



**Below, you will find 15 general questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a State Report as well.**

**Review Questions:**

1. List the states and/or bodies of water that border this state.
2. What was the date of statehood?
3. What is the state capital?
4. What is the state motto?
5. Name at least one state nickname.
6. Describe the state flag.
7. What is the state bird?
8. What is the state flower?
9. List at least 5 other state symbols.
10. Describe this state's government.
11. Name the major imports and exports for this state.
12. Describe the weather and climate in this state.
13. List at least 5 famous people from this state.
14. Describe at least 5 significant events in this state's history.
15. What other interesting information have you learned about this state?

## **Answers to Review Questions:**

