



The  
Escambia  
County  
Historical  
Society,  
Founded  
1971

## The March, 2021 Newsletter

**There Will Not Be A March Meeting. Students Are on the Campus for the Spring Term. However, the Museum and Alabama Room Are Still Closed.**

### News from the Museum and the Alabama Room

There is still no definite date for reopening the Museum and Alabama Room or a date for an ECHS meeting. However, Don still welcomes visitors to the Museum. He is there Tuesday—Thursday, 9:00 am-4:30 pm.

The museum and Alabama Room are still available to individuals who contact Don for an appointment. Address: P.O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427; Phone: 251-809-1528; E-mail: <escambiacohistoricalsociety@gmail.com>.

*Remember this is the time to renew your membership to the society. The current dues are: Single, \$25 - Multiple members at the same address, \$35 - Business, \$100, and Lifetime, \$500 (per individual). You can mail payments to: \*Escambia County Historical Society, P. O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427.*

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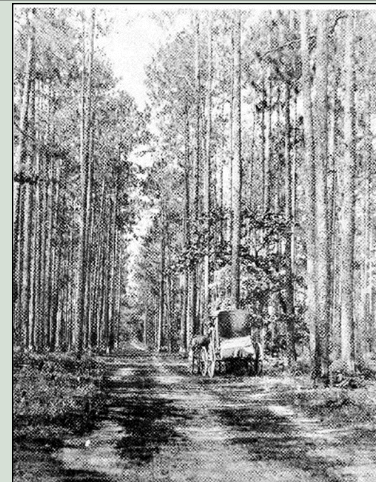
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**The Eugene Allen Smith Wagon on display at the Alabama Museum of Natural History in Tuscaloosa. Alabama's First State Geologist, Dr. Smith, used his mule-drawn wagon to facilitate his summers surveying Alabama's geology.**



**Dr. Smith's buggy in a pine forest in Escambia County, Ala. He has stopped to take a photograph at the site of what would become the Fannie Oil Field, discovered in 1974.**



Rose-Morris House  
Circa 1850

Volume 48 No 3  
March 2021

## This Week in Alabama History

March 15 - 21

From the Alabama Department of Archives and History

March 17, 1825

### Benjamin Sterling Turner Is Born a Slave in North Carolina.



**Benjamin Sterling  
Turner**

In 1830 he was brought to Dallas County, Alabama. After freedom, Turner began a mercantile business and was elected Dallas County tax collector in 1867. In 1871 Turner was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, becoming the state's first African-American congressman.

From the *North Carolina Encyclopedia*:

In Congress, Turner introduced legislation aimed

at stimulating the South's economy, and he stressed this

need in his appeal for a public building program to aid war-devastated Selma. Other bills that he introduced were designed to restore political and legal rights to ex-Confederates generally and to some of his Dallas County constituents in particular, but they were not approved by Congress.

His speech, *Public Buildings in Selma, Alabama—The Refunding of the Cotton Tax*, was printed as a pamphlet in 1872. This and other speeches reveal an unbiased concern for all of his constituents. During his tenure in the House, Turner was described by the Washington correspondent for the *New York Globe* as "a big broad-shouldered man with a large nose and curly hair." He also observed that Turner was "very quiet, always present (when the House was in session) . . . and among Republican colleagues has a considerable reputation for good sense and political sagacity" (<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/turner-benjamin-sterling>).

March 17, 1863

### John Pelham, a 24-Year-old Confederate Hero from Calhoun County, Is Mortally Wounded on the Battlefield at Kelley's Ford, Virginia.



**John Pelham  
(1838-1863).**

He died the next day and his body lay in state in the capitol at Richmond before being taken to Alabama for burial. Pelham's skill and daring as an artillery commander distinguished him from the outset of the Civil War and earned him the nickname "the gallant Pelham" from Robert E. Lee.

He had received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1856, under an experimental five-year program

instituted by U.S. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis in 1954. Pelham left the academy to join the Confederate Army when Virginia seceded from the Union in April 1861.

He rose through the ranks of the Confederate Army to become an artillery major and was one of the most noted Confederate artillery officers of the American Civil War. Serving in the Eastern Theater, and mostly in Virginia, he organized and commanded James Ewell Brown (J. E. B.) Stuart's Horse Artillery. Pelham and the men in his command, many of whom came from the Alabama cities of Mobile and Talladega, made a significant contribution to the early success of the Confederate cavalry.

Highly regarded for his courage and charisma, thus Lee's nickname for him, "the gallant Pelham," the cities of Pelham in Alabama and Georgia were named in his honor.

Picture and text from ADAH and *Encyclopedia of Alabama*.



# This Week in Alabama History

March 15 - 21

From the Alabama Department of Archives and History

March 20, 1872

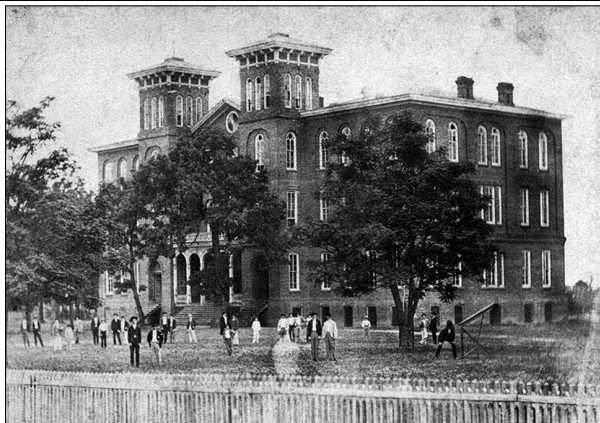
## Because of Financial Problems, the Methodist Church Transfers the Grounds, Buildings, and Legal Control of East Alabama Male College in Auburn to the State of Alabama.

The institution is re-chartered as the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama, the first land-grant college in the South to be established separate from the state university. The school became Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1899 and Auburn University in 1960.

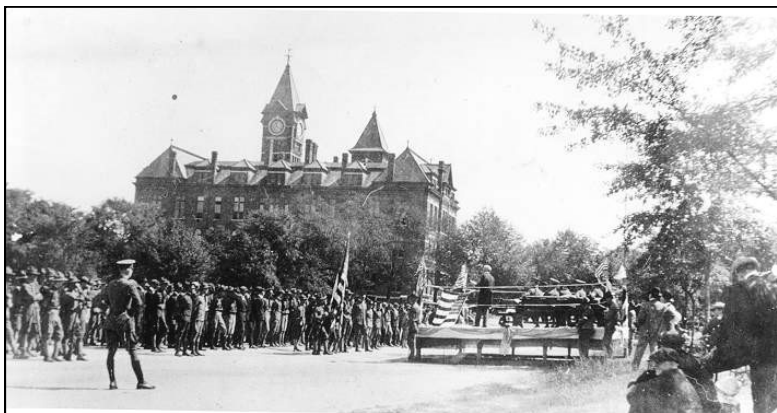
Auburn University's origins lie in an 1854 proposal from local citizens and community leaders in Auburn and Greensboro that the state Methodist conference locate a college in whichever town first raised pledges of \$100,000.

By 1856 Auburn had \$100,000 but Greensboro had raised \$300,000. As a result, the conference leaders rewarded Greensboro with the establishment of Southern College (now Birmingham Southern college in Birmingham).

Auburn leaders continued to pursue a college, and the Methodist conference agreed to found East Alabama Male College (EAMC) there. In October 1859, the school opened with one building, the "Old Main." The school was guided by a 51 member board of trustees and



**Old Main, shown here circa 1883, was the center of learning at East Alabama Male College (now Auburn University) until it burned in 1887. Samford Hall, which replaced it, was named for William J. Samford, Alabama's 31st governor.**



### Throughout the years, the Institution Has Had Four Official Names:

- East Alabama Male College (1856-72)
- Agricultural and Mechanical College (1872-99)
- Alabama Polytechnic Institute (1899-1960)
- Auburn University (1960-present)

Methodist minister and former professor at Oxford College (now Emory University) William Assent as its president.

East Alabama Male College struggled to remain viable, as did many colleges in the post-war South. With significantly fewer students, faculty, and funds, it reopened in 1866 under Pres. James F. Dowdell. Officials tried various schemes to increase enrollment—including considering enrolling women and establishing a school of science and a commerce department—and to secure funds until its board of trustees transferred ownership of the school to the state in February 1872.

*Pictures and text from ADAH and Encyclopedia of Alabama.*

**At Left, Alabama Polytechnic Institute Cadets drill on Ross Square in 1918. Land-Grant Colleges required students to participate in military training.**

# This Week in Alabama History

## March 15 - 21

From the Alabama Department of Archives and History

### March 15, 1929

## Elba Residents Are Forced to Take Refuge on Housetops as They Await Rescue from Rapidly Rising Flood Waters.

Rains beginning in late February resulted in flooding that affected most of the state and left 15,000 south Alabamians homeless. Although the Flood of 1929 hit Elba the hardest, several other towns, including Geneva and Brewton, were covered in as much as fifteen feet of water.

From the *Encyclopedia of Alabama's* Facebook site:

The March 1929 Flood in Alabama was the first time in U.S. history that its military aircraft were mobilized for civilian emergency aid. On March 14, 1929, thousands of people in south Alabama were stranded, many on rooftops, by flood waters. Highways and railroads had been washed away, and communication lines were down. The currents of the flood waters prevented boats from being of much use for rescue efforts.



**Aerial view of Elba, Alabama, after the Pea River flooded.**



**Aerial photo of flooding in Brewton in March 1929.**

That evening, Governor Bibb Graves contacted the commanding officer at Maxwell Field, a United States Army Air Corps facility in Montgomery, for assistance. Major Walter Reed Weaver responded quickly. A communications truck was dispatched to Elba. The truck could contact aircraft, and then relay the messages to the governor and the Red Cross.

The next morning, as soon as there was enough light to see, aircraft were taking off from Maxwell every 30 minutes to observe conditions on the ground. The flights continued over the next five days, with planes from Maxwell Field providing information and making air-drops of food and supplies from the Red Cross. By March 20, pilots had made 346 sorties from the airfield

([https://www.facebook.com/154486766135/posts/the-march-1929-](https://www.facebook.com/154486766135/posts/the-march-1929-flood-in-alabama-was-the-first-time-in-us-history-that-its-milita/10157853811281136/)

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**Construction of a levee in Elba, Ala., in 1933 or 1934. Levees were constructed in several areas around the state to control flooding.**

### According to an Article by Kelly Kazek:

- **Almost 30 inches of rain fell in Elba.**
- **Ten feet of water or more stood in the towns of Elba and Geneva.**
- **Thousands of people were stranded in Elba for up to three days before rescuers arrived.**
- **Damage: \$9 million, which would equal \$120 million today.**
- **Deaths: 13**

([https://www.al.com/living/2015/12/a\\_look\\_at\\_alabamas\\_deadliest\\_f.html](https://www.al.com/living/2015/12/a_look_at_alabamas_deadliest_f.html)).



## This Week in Alabama History

March 15 - 21

From the Alabama Department of Archives and History

March 21, 1932

### Over 250 Alabamians Die in Tornadoes that Sweep the State.

More than 1,500 others were injured and damage was estimated at \$5 million. The western and north-central parts of the state, especially the towns of Northport, Cullman, and Columbiana, were hardest hit.

*The following account of the storm is by John Morse from a site for Jefferson County, Ala. History:*

March 21, the Monday after Palm Sunday, was a warm and muggy spring day, with temperatures near 80°. There were signs of a cold front on its way, pushing a line of storms into the area. A mild warning was issued in the newspaper weather reports. Those gifted with foresight brought their animals inside and hunkered down with their radios to ride out the approaching front.

By mid-afternoon though, all hell was breaking loose. A series of storm cells mushroomed and began plowing their way up from Mississippi, unleashing massive tornadoes that tore apart 7,000 homes and businesses in several central and north Alabama counties. The deadliest twister pushed through Tuscaloosa and Northport on its way northeast toward Clanton. Other tracks crossed Shelby County and points south, with smaller tornadoes impacting almost every corner of the state. There were 268 Alabamians who died that day. Some were pulled from their homes and thrown onto the ground. Others were trapped in collapsing buildings.



**Shelby County Tornado.**  
*Photo by W. M. Russell*

New, smaller cameras made amateur storm-chaser photography possible. W. M. Russell of Boothton snapped a menacing shot of a dark funnel cloud traversing part of Shelby County (photo shown at left). The photo later ran in the Birmingham News, along with numerous stories of personal tragedy and images of debris strewn across wide swaths of the state.

Columbiana was the hardest-hit town in Shelby County, with 15 dead. Sylacauga was also pummeled, with 29 dead inside the city limits and another 11 found in nearby rural areas. Luther Kelly, who had lost his first wife to a 1917 tornado, lost his second wife in the storm.

In Northport a group of seven townsmen ran for the shelter of a livery stable. The sole survivor of the ordeal described the approaching monster as sounding like "49 trains running wide open." As many as two-thousand people in the Tuscaloosa area were rendered homeless. The old gymnasium at the University of Alabama was pressed into service as a temporary infirmary to relieve the overfilled Druid City Hospital. The clock at the flattened Tuscaloosa Country Club recorded the time of the disaster as 4:01 PM (<https://birminghamhistorycenter.wordpress.com/2011/04/29/may-21-1932/>).

March 21, 1965

### Rev. Martin Luther King Leads 3,200 Marchers from Selma toward Montgomery in Support of Civil Rights for Black Americans, after Two Earlier Marches had Ended at the Edmund Pettus Bridge--the First in Violence and the Second in Prayer.

Four days later, outside the Alabama state capitol, King told 25,000 demonstrators that "we are on the move now . . . and no wave of racism can stop us." On August 6, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law.



**Participants, some carrying American flags, marching in the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965.**

## This Week in Alabama History

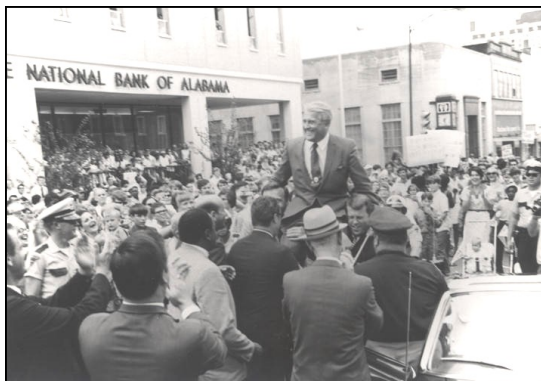
March 15 - 21

From the Alabama Department of Archives and History

March 17, 1970

**The Alabama Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville is Dedicated, with Wernher von Braun Calling It "a Graphic Display of Man's Entering into the Cosmic Age."**

Now known as the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, visitors tour the museum, which includes rockets and spacecraft, and participate in activities like Space Camp.



**The Alabama Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville is dedicated. Von Braun is carried through the crowd.**

## This Week in Alabama History

March 22 - 28

From the Alabama Department of Archives and History

March 27, 1814

**In the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, Andrew Jackson Leads a Force of Americans, Creeks, and Cherokees against Red Stick Creeks.**

Attacking the Red Stick stronghold of Tohopeka on the banks of the Tallapoosa River, Jackson's men killed more than 900 people. The victory soon led to the end of the Creek War and the cession of 23 million acres of Creek territory to the United States.

*From an article on the National Park Service's website, "The Battle of Horseshoe Bend: Collision of Cultures (Teaching with Historic Places)":*

Today the Tallapoosa River quietly winds its way through east-central Alabama, its banks edged by the remnants of the forest that once covered the Southeast. About halfway down its 270-mile run to the southwest, the river curls back on itself to form a peninsula. The land defined by this "horseshoe bend" covers about 100 wooded acres; a finger of high ground points down its center, and an island stands sentinel on its west side.



**Horseshoe Bend National Military Park**

This tranquil setting belies the violence that cut through Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814. On the peninsula stood 1,000 American Indian warriors, members of the tribe European Americans knew as the Creek. These men, along with 350 women and children, had arrived over the previous six months in search of refuge. Many had been part of a series of costly battles during the past year, all fought in an attempt to regain the autonomy

the Indians had held before the arrival of European Americans. Surrounding the Creeks were forces led by future President Andrew Jackson, then a major general of the Tennessee Militia. The core of his force was 2,600 European American soldiers, most of whom hoped that a victory would open

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## This Week in Alabama History

March 22 - 28

From the Alabama Department of Archives and History

(Continued from page 6)

native land to European American settlement. Yet this fight was not simply European American versus American Indian: on Jackson's side were 600 "friendly" Indians, including 100 Creek.

The Battle of Horseshoe Bend, as the events of March 27 became known, illustrated three long-running conflicts in American history. It was yet another fight between European Americans and

American Indians, in this case the decisive battle in the Creek War (1813- 1814). That day and those leading up to it also provided an example of tensions among American Indians, even those in the same tribe. Finally, both Creek factions received support from white governments, thereby continuing the long tradition of European nations attempting to defeat their rivals by enlisting the native population (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-battle-of-horseshoe-bend-collision-of-cultures-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>).

### March 24, 1832

**In Washington, D.C., Representatives of the Creek Indians Sign a Treaty Ceding "to the United States all Their Land, East of the Mississippi," which Included Large Portions of East Alabama.**

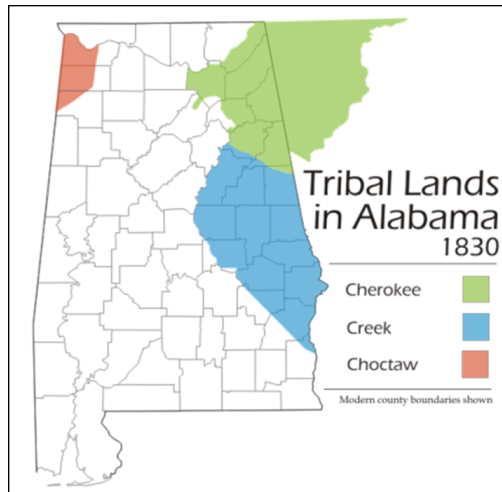
Known as the Treaty of Cusseta, it was negotiated in the wake of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Approximately 20,000 Creeks were removed to the Oklahoma Indian Territory by 1840, although some remained, including the ancestors of the Poarch Band of Creeks, who are concentrated near Atmore, Alabama.

From the article "Treaty of Cusseta Is Signed" at the World History website:

Although the Creeks had been forced from Georgia, with many Lower Creeks moving to the Indian Territory, there were still about 20,000 Upper Creeks living in Alabama.

However, the state moved to abolish tribal governments and extend state laws over the Creeks. Opothle Yohola (shown at the right), appealed to the administration of President Andrew Jackson for protection from Alabama; when none was forthcoming, the Treaty of Cusseta was signed on March 24, 1832, which divided up Creek lands into individual allotments.

Creeks could either sell their allotments and receive funds to remove to the west, or stay in



**Opothle Yohola was a leader of the Tuckabatchee Creeks and became the principal chief of the Creek Nation. He was one of the most outspoken opponents of Creek Removal.**

Alabama and submit to state laws. Land speculators and squatters began to defraud Creeks out of their allotments, and violence broke out, leading to the so-called "Creek War of 1836." Secretary of War Lewis Cass dispatched General Winfield Scott to end the violence by forcibly removing the Creeks to the Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River.

The Treaty of Cusseta was one of several with the "Five Civilized Tribes," facilitated by the Indian Removal Act, that led to the deportation of native peoples in the South to the west. Between 1814 and 1830, Creek lands had been gradually ceded to the United States through treaties such as the Treaty of Fort Jackson and the Treaty of Washington (1826) until Creek territory was constrained to a strip in east central Alabama along the Georgia border.

Although treaty stipulations prohibited settlement of Creek lands, squatters moving into the territory were common and caused significant friction with

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# This Week in Alabama History

## March 22 - 28

*From the Alabama Department of Archives and History*

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tribe members. Tensions eventually resulted in a party of Creek warriors attacking and burning the town of Roanoke, Georgia. In response, federal officials met with Creek leaders in the Creek village of Cusseta (Kasihta) on the Chattahoochee River in Georgia.

(Cusseta was sited on the current location of Lawson Army Airfield in Fort Benning.) The Creeks were compelled to agree to federal terms as outlined in the Treaty of Cusseta. The treaty was later signed in Washington, D.C. (<https://worldhistoryproject.org/1832/3/24/treaty-of-cusseta-is-signed>).

### March 24, 1853

#### William Rufus King of Selma Is Inaugurated as Vice President of the United States near Havana, Cuba.

Elected the previous fall on the Democratic ticket with Franklin Pierce, King had been in the warm Cuban climate since January in an attempt to recover his failing health. When it became apparent that he would be unable to travel to Washington for the inauguration, Congress passed a special act to allow him to take the oath of office in Cuba. When his health did not improve, King returned to Alabama, where he died April 18, 1853, never formally serving as Vice President.

*From an article on King at <<http://www.nwpapride.org/article.php?recordid=201510williamrufusking>>:*

King served in the U.S. Congress for nearly 30 years. He was elected a U.S. representative from North Carolina and a senator from Alabama. He won a record breaking 11 elections to the position of president pro-tempore of the Senate. He also served as minister to France.

A Democrat, King was a Unionist with moderate views on slavery and westward expansion. He helped draft the Compromise of 1850, a series of bills that attempted to diffuse tensions between the North and the South.

A native of North Carolina, King purchased property along the Alabama River at what came to be known as



**William Rufus King  
(April 7, 1796-April  
18, 1853)**

"King's Bend." He operated one of the largest plantations in the state. He and others founded the nearby town of Selma, which King named after a site in a classical legend.

**This portrait, to the left, of vice-president King was painted in 1839 by George Cooke.**

**A noted portraitist, Cooke was a favorite of Alabama industrialist Daniel Pratt, who built a special gallery attached to his home just to house Cooke's paintings.**



**This mid-nineteenth-century print depicts Chestnut Hill, the estate of King. He built it around 1820 on the east bank of the Alabama River opposite the state capital at Cahaba in Dallas County. The structure burned in 1920.**

**Pictures and accompanying text from the Encyclopedia of Alabama <<http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1886>>.**



# This Week in Alabama History

March 22 - 28

From the Alabama Department of Archives and History

March 25, 1931

## Nine Black Youths, Soon to Be Known as the Scottsboro Boys, Are Arrested in Paint Rock and Jailed in Scottsboro, the Jackson County Seat.

Charged with raping two white women on a freight train from Chattanooga, the sheriff had to protect them from mob violence that night. Within a month, eight of the nine were sentenced to death. Based on questionable evidence, the convictions by an all-white jury generated international outrage.

From the article "The Scottsboro Boys" on the website for the National Museum of African American History and Culture:

The case of the Scottsboro Boys, which lasted more than 80 years, helped to spur the Civil Rights Movement. The perseverance of the Scottsboro Boys and the attorneys and community leaders who supported their case helped to inspire several prominent activists and organizers. To Kill a Mockingbird, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by white author Harper Lee, is also loosely based on this case.

On March 25, 1931, nine African American teenagers were accused of raping two white women aboard a Southern Railroad freight train in northern Alabama.

Haywood Patterson, Olen Montgomery, Clarence Norris, Willie Roberson, Andy Wright, Ozzie Powell, Eugene Williams, Charley Weems and Roy Wright were searching for work when a racially-charged fight broke out between passengers. The fight is said to have started when a young white man stepped on the hand of one of the Scottsboro Boys.



**The Scottsboro Boys, with attorney Samuel Leibowitz, under guard by the state militia, 1932.**



**Victoria Price (left) and Ruby Bates (right) in 1931**

The young white men who were fighting were forced to exit the train. Enraged, they conjured a story of how the black men were at fault for the incident. By the time the train reached Paint Rock, Alabama, the Scottsboro Boys were met with an angry mob and charged with assault. Victoria Price and Ruby Bates, two white women who were also riding the freight train, faced charges of vagrancy and illegal sexual activity. In order to avoid these charges, they falsely accused the Scottsboro Boys of rape.

The original cases were tried in Scottsboro, Alabama. Only four of the young African American men knew each other prior to the incident on the freight train, but as the trials drew increasing regional and national attention they became known as the Scottsboro Boys. On April 9, 1931, eight of the nine young men were convicted and sentenced to death. The judge granted Roy Wright, the youngest of the group, a mistrial because of age—despite the recommendation of the all-

white jury. After this initial verdict, protests emerged in the north, leading to the U.S. Supreme Court overturning the convictions in 1932, in *Powell v. State of Alabama*. The Supreme Court demanded a retrial on the grounds that the young men did not have ade-

*(Continued on page 10)*

## This Week in Alabama History

March 22 - 28

From the Alabama Department of Archives and History

(Continued from page 9)

quate legal representation. A series of retrials and reconvictions followed and the Scottsboro Boys collectively served more than 100 years in prison. Subsequently, the national conversation and protests of unfair and unequal court proceedings led to two additional groundbreaking Supreme Court decisions in 1935 on jury diversification: *Patterson v. State of Alabama* and *Norris v. State of Alabama* (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog/scottsboro-boys>).

Clarence Norris, the last surviving member of the Scottsboro Boys,



**The crowd at Scottsboro on April 6, 1931**

received a pardon from Governor George Wallace in 1976. Largely because of the determined efforts of Scottsboro native Sheila Washington, the Alabama legislature voted in 2013 to give posthumous pardons to Haywood Patterson, Charles Weems, and Andy Wright, all who had been repeatedly convicted on rape in the 1930s. Governor Robert Bentley signed the measure into law in a ceremony at the Scottsboro Boys Museum and Cultural Center. Governor Bentley said at the time, "This has been a long time coming, but it's never too late to do the right thing" (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog/scottsboro-boys>).

March 26, 1910

### Orville Wright Pilots the First Plane in Alabama, Causing the Montgomery Advertiser to report "a Strange New Bird Soared over the Cotton Fields West of Montgomery."

The Wright brothers came to Montgomery to set up a pilots' training school. Several pilots were trained, but the brothers left the area by the end of May.

Replacement parts for broken machinery were difficult to locate in the area and the flyers' efforts were frustrated by numerous spectators.

The location was later used for aircraft repair during World War I and on November 8, 1922, the installation became Maxwell Field, which would evolve into what is now Maxwell Air Force Base.

From the article "Wright Brothers Flying School" by Jerome KA. Enneis at (<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1364>):

Just seven years after the Wright's successful flight



**Wright brothers flying over the Kohn plantation in Montgomery, Alabama, where they set up a flying school.**

at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the monopoly they held on the flying market was being seriously challenged by other inventors of flying machines. In hopes of retaining a share of the newly emerging aviation market, the brothers formed a touring company to conduct flying exhibitions to promote the sale of their airplanes.

The Wrights needed to train pilots who would fly in exhibitions and teach buyers how to fly. The weather in Dayton, Ohio, was unfavorable for flying in the winter,

and Wilbur left home on February 11 in search of a place suitable for early spring pilot training.

He visited several southern cities and, after a disappointing stop in Jacksonville, Florida, a local

(Continued on page 11)



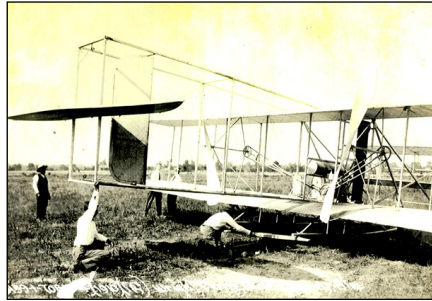
# This Week in Alabama History

## March 22 - 28

*From the Alabama Department of Archives and History*

*(Continued from page 10)*

resident suggested that he try Montgomery, which he described as having a "mild climate and flat Farmland."



**The Wright brothers shipped a biplane to Montgomery in March 1910 in order to train students at their civilian flight school. Orville Wright added a rear horizontal wing to increase stability at high altitudes, but the craft's engine failed on a regular basis, hampering the progress of the school's first and only season.**

### Speak a Proud Heritage from Along the Ridges by Louise Howe Bailey

#### **Thanks to ECHS member Robert Smiley for sending us this excellent article.**

Each new road that cuts a swath through the hills lays another stepping stone between the mountain man and his urban brother, chipping away a little of the individuality of those who live along its course.

The ways of the old timers are bowing to the age of progress, relinquishing, among other things, a manner of speaking that is as old as the English language.

Often deprived of an opportunity for formal education, the mountain people have preserved words and expressions that are the purest English unaltered by variations that have come into common usage over the centuries. The outsider who brands the mountaineers' way of talking as simply ungrammatical should reread Chaucer, Shakespeare, the Anglo-Saxon writers and, for that matter, the Bible.

The mountain woman who says, "I'd as lief do one thing as another," keeps alive a word of Sir Thomas Malory, who wrote of Queen Guinevere, "She had liefer slay herself."

"Afore," "twixt," "pert," "a heap o'," "afeared," "holp," "yander" "up an' done it" – Chaucer and Shakespeare used them exactly as they are used today. Lord Bacon wrote of "birds' nestes" and "fence postes," while a variety of Elizabethan characters "clum" their mountains, had their bundles "wropped" and "fotched" them home. The expression "back a letter," stems from the days before envelopes, when the address was written on the back of the letter itself.

The following paragraph, spoken by a mountain woman to a lad setting out on a journey, bears quoting as an example of the Elizabethan English used by the parents and grandparents of our pioneer settlers. Through our mountain people it has been preserved to

the present day as a spoken language.

"Hit's been a-being' so rainy sence the fust o' the month the road'll be plum' full o' mud holes. You a-walkin' ye'll have to surround 'em. If ye ain't tetchy about a-totin' it, take this here poke o' apples wi' ye. They're little-bitty 'uns, but least-ways they'll do to chaw on. I 'low ye'll git ther' afore good dark if ye hump it."

Charming too are the expressions coined on the spur of the moment when a word doesn't stand ready. Such was the case when a man, not to be outdone by friends boasting of the blood lines of their hunting dogs, said of his special pet, "Now that ther' dog o' mine is half feist an' half full cur."

"I want ye to fare sumptuous," said a host to the guests at his talbe. "We don' want to see no timid eaters."

Unimpressed by the extra hours of duty for which her friend had volunteered, a woman laughed and said "I ain't all that workified."

The expression "p'int blank," head less often nowadays than formally, is used for emphasis, as when a woman described to a boy the location of a house that he was having trouble finding. She said, "Why, ye've gone plum' around it an' left hit a-setting p'int blank in the middle."

Whatever may be the origin, the delightful word "sigodlin," meaning off-balance, is still heard occasionally through the mountains. "Set the baby up straight," a mother said, "She'll fall over if ye leave 'er a-settin' sigodlin."

A little bit of history is lost each time the school bus makes its morning run taking the descendants of our pioneer families to the common ground of the classroom.

**ECHOES**  
 THE NEWSLETTER FOR  
 THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY  
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427;  
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