



Discovering Alabama

Teacher's Guide State Capitals

Suggested Curriculum Areas

History
Geography
Science

Suggested Grade Levels

K-12

Key Concepts

Statehood
Politics
Bicentennial

Key Skills

Research
Cooperative Learning
Map Making

Synopsis

Alabama has had five different capitals since its first territorial legislature made the claim for statehood. This video visits each of these capital sites, examines archival records, and interviews a number of historians, archaeologists, and others in telling the interesting stories associated with the history of Alabama's five capitals. The video is produced in celebration of Alabama's bicentennial.



Discovering Alabama is a production of the **Alabama Museum of Natural History** in cooperation with **Alabama Public Television** and **The University of Alabama College of Continuing Studies**. For a complete list of titles in the *Discovering Alabama* series, as well as information about ordering videos and accompanying Teacher's Guides, contact us at either: *Discovering Alabama*, Box 870340, Tuscaloosa AL 35487-0340; phone: 205-348-2039; fax: 205-348-4219; or email: orders@discoveringalabama.org. Also visit our website: www.discoveringalabama.org.

This program was produced with support from the following organizations:



Alabama Tourism
Department

*The Solon and Martha
Dixon Foundation*



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA*



Before Viewing

1 Have each of your students draw the outline of the shape/configuration of Alabama and, within this outline, place a mark (a dot, X, or other mark) indicating where they think the capital of our state is located. Next to their mark have each student write the name of the city that is Alabama's state capital. (Granted this is a simple task but, given the pop culture of our times, don't be surprised if there are a few of your students who actually have difficulty naming and locating their state's capital. Whatever the case, this simple activity can serve as a fun warm-up for viewing the video.)

2 Next have students place a mark on their outline maps indicating where they think Alabama's capital was located originally (when the "Alabama Territory" made claim for statehood). Ask them to add to their maps what they think is the name of this location, and then to include any additional locations and names for other places they think might have served as the state capital at some point in time.

While Viewing

Have students note the name and locations of each of Alabama's five capitals and the number of years each served as the capital.

Video Mystery Question: What kind of physiographic feature is common to all five of Alabama's capitals? (Answer: All locations are along rivers.)

After Viewing

1 Return students to their small groups and have each group create a single group map showing accurate names and locations for each of Alabama's five capitals. Have them calculate the distance from your school to each of the capital sites.

2 Have them compile a group list of reasons why each of the five locations was selected to be the capital. Allow groups to share and discuss with the class their listed reasons together with any other interesting tidbits of information gleaned from the video. Include discussion of the archaeological research and findings at capital sites.

Extensions

1 Assign individual or group projects to research and report on the history of a selected historical capital.

2 View other *Discovering Alabama* programs that present aspects of Alabama's history and development during the 200 years of statehood. Examples include "Coastal History," "Black Warrior River," "Locust Fork River," "Alabama Rivers," "Black Belt – Part 1," "Forest History," "Fort Morgan," "Fort Toulouse," "Village Creek," and "Wildlife History."

Philosophical Reflections

The history of Alabama is tied closely to the state's natural resources – soils, forests, rivers, and other aspects of Alabama's abundant natural heritage. These exceptional environmental assets and qualities still abide across our state. Meanwhile, as Alabama today seeks the kinds of development that typify the urban growth of other areas, new kinds of land-altering environmental impacts are sure to follow. Unfortunately, this seems of lesser concern to those who hold the view that Alabama's plentiful rural backcountry gives an impression of the state as backwards, and "behind". However, in a world where so many regions are today experiencing extensive loss of natural surroundings, might Alabama's still-abundant rural lands actually help to place our state quite ahead?

Nature in Art

The story of Alabama's capitals involves historical dates, names, and related events. However, the history of Alabama's capitals is also associated with varied natural settings, scenes of which are presented in the video. Add to the "While Viewing" activities by having students make note of any such scenes that strike them as especially appealing and/or artistic.

Community Connections

1 Place students in research teams of "history hounds" and arrange with a newspaper in your area to carry a regular Sunday item of interesting tidbits of Alabama history researched and written by the teams.

2 Have the class organize and host a night of "Alabama History for Parents," during which parents are invited to school for an hour of history presentations by students. This might involve showing and discussing the video "State Capitals" (or another Discovering Alabama program of historical content), a talk by a guest historian, student presentation of historical interest, or any number of creative ideas the class might wish to develop.

Additional References & Resources

- *The Story of Alabama* by Virginia Vander Veer Hamilton. Viewpoint Publications, 1980.
- *Amazing Alabama: A Coloring Book Journey through Our 67 Counties* by Laura Murray. New South Books, 2017.
- "Capitals of Alabama," Alabama Department of Archives and History, July 16, 2011:
<http://archives.state.al.us/>
- "State Capitals," Encyclopedia of Alabama:
www.encyclopediaofalabama.org
- *Alabama Footprints, Vol I-V*:
www.alabamapioneers.com
- *Discovering Alabama Forests* by Doug Phillips. University of Alabama Press, 2006.

Parting Thoughts

Alabama's bicentennial is an apt occasion for reflecting about how the state has changed from the original "Alabama Territory" of sparsely populated wilderness to a fully inhabited region of more than four million people, with cities, towns, highways, and airports throughout the state, and with industrial and technology centers in many parts of the state. Indeed, today Alabama is "on the map" with a number of globally recognized manufacturing operations such as Mercedes Benz that continue to attract more growth and more change to our state.

*The bicentennial therefore is also an apt occasion to reflect on the accelerating pace of change in our world today and consider what this might mean for Alabama in the state's next 200 years. With the South now the fastest growing region in the nation, the picture of our state's future might be seen, for example, as similar to the crowded growth surrounding nearby Atlanta, Georgia, rather than the more comfortable surroundings that typify Alabama today. The conclusion of my book *Discovering Alabama Forests* sums up the uniquely special natural qualities that set Alabama apart from other regions, and Chapter 3 of the book offers five recommendations that would serve to retain these qualities for the future. Let us celebrate Alabama's bicentennial with pride for our state's history and the economic growth, racial progress, natural environment, and general quality of life we have today – and let us celebrate with commitment to thoughtful planning for sustaining these special values for the future.*

*Oh yeah, I almost forgot. Congratulations to the Alabama Bicentennial Commission for an outstanding job of ensuring a successful bicentennial celebration. And special thanks to the Alabama Tourism Department for their support of *Discovering Alabama* and helping make possible the production of this special program in tribute to Alabama's bicentennial.*

Happy outings,

Dr. Doug





Discovering Alabama

Activity/Information Sheet

State Capitals

Change in Alabama*

Alabama's present state capitol is in Montgomery, located on Capitol Hill, originally called Goat Hill. It is a National Historic Landmark in recognition that the capitol building temporarily served as the Confederate Capitol while Montgomery served as the first poli-

tical capital of the Confederate States of America in 1861.

And it was here at the steps of this once confederate capitol that the third Selma to Montgomery march ended on March 25, 1965, with 25,000 protesters including such prominent voices as Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Coretta Scott King, Ralph Bunche, Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, John Lewis, James Baldwin, Harry Belafonte, and Joan Baez. A delegation from the protesters attempted to see Governor George Wallace to give him a petition that asked for an end to racial discrimination in Alabama. The governor had sent word that he would see the delegation, but they were denied entry to the capitol grounds twice and told no one would be let through. State police surrounded the capitol and prevented the marcher's delegation entry to the grounds. Martin Luther King, Jr. then gave an impassioned speech at the base of the steps: "We are not about to turn around. We are on the move now. Yes, we are on

the move and no wave of racism can stop us."

The delegation was later let through into the capitol, but were told that Wallace's office was closed for the day. The delegation left, without having been able to give their petition to the Governor. It read: "We have come not only five days and fifty miles but we have come from three centuries of suffering and hardship. We have come to you, the Governor of Alabama, to declare that we must have our freedom now. We must have the right to vote; we must have equal protection of the law and an end to police brutality." —Selma to Montgomery marchers petition.

These and other related events that happened here in Alabama, at Alabama's state capitol, were pivotal in touching hearts and minds across the nation, leading to passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and changing the course of almost 200 years of racial oppression in the U.S.

*Partially excerpted from *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.*

