

ALABAMA HISTORY

Thousands of years before European explorers found the land now known as Alabama, it was inhabited by Native Americans. Spanish explorer Alonso Alvarez de Pineda sailed into Mobile Bay in 1519, making the Spanish flag the first of six that would fly over Alabama. Under the vague terms of the 1697 Peace of Ryswick, the French claimed that La Salle's explorations entitled them to a portion of the New World, including Alabama. Pierre Le Moyne (Sieur d'Iberville) and a group of colonists set up a temporary settlement on Dauphin Island in 1699. The French established Fort Louis on the Mobile River in 1702. After defeating the French in 1763, the British took control of French holdings in Alabama, making the British Union Jack the third flag to fly over the area. Spain supported the colonies in the American Revolution, after the war claimed British holdings. However, the British used Mobile as a port during the War of 1812. That action prompted the United States to seize the southernmost area of the state in 1813, making the American flag the fourth to fly over Alabama.

Congress passed an enabling act in March 1819, allowing residents in Alabama to write a constitution and apply for statehood. On December 14, 1819, Alabama became the twenty-second state to join the union.

Alabama seceded from the union on January 11, 1861, and for a brief period, a fifth flag — that of the Republic of Alabama — flew over the capitol. Then in early February, a group met in Montgomery to establish the Confederate States of America. Jefferson Davis was elected president. Montgomery was the capital of the Confederacy until May 1861 when the government moved to Richmond, Virginia, to be closer to the battlefields. Following the defeat of the Confederacy, Alabama was occupied by federal troops, and it was not until June 25, 1868 that the state was re-admitted to the union.

During the twentieth century, the state has been at the forefront of the nation in both social and technological changes, as Alabama became a center for the Civil Rights Movement and helped give birth to America's space program.

Today, almost five million people live in Alabama. Like the first inhabitants of this area, residents can still enjoy some of the most beautiful scenery in the United States, from the wooded Appalachian foothills found in the northern portion of the state, to the sugar-white beaches on the Gulf of Mexico.

ALABAMA HIGHLIGHTS

Motto: *"We Dare Defend Our Rights"*

Nickname: *"Sweet Home Alabama"*

Flower: *Camellia*

Bird: *Yellowhammer (Northern Flicker)*

Tree: *Longleaf Pine*

Song: *"Alabama" by Julia Tutwiler & Edna Gussen*

Fish: *Tarpon*

Bread: *Corn Bread*

Reptile: *Red-Bellied Turtle*

Shell: *Scaphella Junonia Johnstoneae*

Gemstone: *Star Blue Quartz*

Flag: *Saint Andrew*

Capital: *Montgomery*

Counties: *67*

Population: *4,833,722 (2013 U.S. census estimate)*

THE GREAT SEAL



The Secretary of State is the sole custodian of the Great Seal of Alabama. Use of the Great Seal is controlled by state law, and only a few staff members within the Secretary of State's Office have permission to affix the seal to documents.

The design of the seal was chosen in 1817 by William Wyatt Bibb, Governor of what was then the Alabama Territory, after he received Congressional authorization to use an official seal. Bibb designed the seal showing a map of Alabama with its rivers to reflect the importance of the river system to the state.

Custody of the Great Seal was officially transferred from the Governor to the Secretary of State in 1852. The Reconstruction Legislature abolished the use of that seal in 1868, and it's believed Secretary of State Charles A. Miller (1868-70) suggested the new seal's design, which featured an eagle and shield.

John Brandon was Secretary of State in 1939 when the Legislature passed a law that changed the seal back to a design similar to the original seal.

ALABAMA'S SECRETARY OF STATE OFFICE



John H. Merrill
Secretary of State

phone: 334-242-7200
www.sos.alabama.gov

The Secretary of State's office existed before Alabama became a state. The first Secretary of State, Henry Hitchcock (1818-19), served for the Alabama Territory. The Secretary of State served a two-year term, from the time Alabama became a state in 1819, until the *Constitution of 1901* set the term at four years. Up until 1868, the Secretary of State was elected by the Legislature instead of by popular vote.

Today, the Secretary of State runs on the same election cycle as the Governor and may serve only two consecutive terms before having to vacate the office for at least one term. If a Secretary of State resigns or dies, the Governor appoints someone to serve for the remainder of the term.

The first Secretary of State received a salary of \$1,000, plus such fees as allowed by law. State law sets the Secretary of State's salary for the 2015-2019 quadrennium at \$85,247.76.

ALABAMA SECRETARIES OF STATE

Minimum requirements for the job are that the Secretary of State must be at least 25 years old, a registered voter, a resident of the state for five years, and a United States citizen for seven years. The state constitution requires that the Secretary of State live in the capital city.

Alabama's Secretaries of State are as follows:

1. Henry Hitchcock	1818-1819	21. Charles C. Langdon	1885-1890	41. Agnes Baggett	1963-1967
2. Thomas A. Rodgers	1819-1821	22. Joseph D. Barron	1890-1894	42. Mabel Sanders Amos	1967-1975
3. James J. Pleasants	1821-1824	23. James K. Jackson	1894-1898	43. Agnes Baggett	1975-1979
4. James I. Thornton	1824-1834	24. Robert P. McDavid	1898-1903	44. Don Siegelman	1979-1987
5. Edmund A. Webster	1834-1836	25. J. Thomas Heflin	1903-1904	45. Glen Browder	1987-1989
6. Thomas B. Tunstall	1836-1840	26. Edmund R. McDavid	1904-1907	46. Fred Crawford	1989-1989
7. William Garrett	1840-1852	27. Frank N. Julian	1907-1910	47. Perry A. Hand	1989-1991
8. Vincent M. Benham	1852-1856	28. Cyrus B. Brown	1910-1915	48. Billy Joe Camp	1991-1993
9. James H. Weaver	1856-1860	29. John Purifoy	1915-1919	49. Jim Bennett	1993-2003
10. Patrick H. Brittan	1860-1865	30. William Peyton Cobb	1919-1923	50. Nancy L. Worley	2003-2007
11. Albert S. Elmore	1865-1866	31. Sidney Herbert Blan	1923-1927	51. Beth Chapman	2007-2013
12. David L. Dalton	1866-1867	32. John Marvin Brandon	1927-1931	52. Jim Bennett	2013-2015
13. Micah Taul	1867-1868	33. Pete Bryant Jarman, Jr.	1931-1935	53. John H. Merrill	2015-
14. Charles A. Miller	1868-1870	34. David Howell Turner	1935-1939		
15. Jabez J. Parker	1870-1872	35. John Marvin Brandon	1939-1943		
16. Patrick Ragland	1872-1873	36. David Howell Turner	1943-1944		
17. Neander H. Rice	1873-1874	37. Sibyl Pool	1944-1951		
18. Rufus K. Boyd	1874-1878	38. Agnes Baggett	1951-1955		
19. William W. Screws	1878-1882	39. Mary Texas Hurt Garner	1955-1959		
20. Ellis Phelan	1882-1885	40. Bettye Frink	1959-1963		

OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS

Secretary of State

John H. Merrill

The Secretary of State's office produces revenue for the state's general fund, usually generating several hundred thousand dollars above what is appropriated for the office.

Physical Address:
Alabama Secretary of State
Alabama State Capitol
600 Dexter Avenue
Suite S-105
Montgomery, AL 36130

Mailing Address:
Alabama Secretary of State
P.O. Box 5616
Montgomery, AL 36103

Executive Office	334-242-7200
Elections	334-242-7210
Business Services	334-242-5324
Lands & Trademarks	334-242-5325

DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

State law gives the Secretary of State over 1,000 different duties, and virtually all of them involve processing and filing documents that are public records. Many of the documents must have the Great Seal of Alabama affixed in order to make them official.

Approximately 500,000 documents are stored in the Secretary of State's office, and they basically fall under four categories: **Executive, Legislature, Elections, and Business.**

In order to keep up with the public demand for access to these records, the office uses extensive computer and information technology. The Alabama Secretary of State's office was one of the first in the nation to successfully store and retrieve the records on an optical disk, but today, many of the corporate and Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) records are available to businesses via the Internet.

Executive: Many of the executive records have both the signatures of the Secretary of State and of the Governor because the Secretary of State serves as the Governor's personal notary public. When the Secretary of State is witnessing the Governor's signature, the Great Seal of Alabama is used as the "notary" seal.

Included in this type of executive records are writs of arrest, contracts, deeds, and leases. Other executive records include listings of abandoned vehicles found in the state, information on municipal incorporations, and the names of all the notaries publicly registered in Alabama.

Legislature: The Secretary of State is custodian of the original legislative bills that become law and is responsible for assigning an act number to each. The office ensures that the acts and minutes from the legislative sessions are distributed in bound volumes called the *Acts of Alabama*, the *House Journal*, and the *Senate Journal*. The Secretary of State also distributes the state law books called the *Code of Alabama, 1975* to governmental agencies.

Elections: The Secretary of State is Alabama's "Chief Election Official." The Secretary of State is given many different election duties under state law. Election records include vote totals, certified ballots, and records showing how much money candidates and political committees raised and spent during an election. Copies of certificates of election, commissions, and oaths of office are also on file for many elected officials.

Business Records: Business records are divided into three categories: **Lands & Trademarks, Business Entities, and Uniform Commercial Code (UCC).**

The Lands and Trademarks Section has the original state land records dating back to the days when Alabama first achieved statehood. All of the trademarks registered in the state are also found here.

Business Entity staff members reserve names of businesses, index domestic filings, and file foreign filings for businesses that register to do business in Alabama. The state has about 500,000 business entity filings, and staff members usually get about 300 requests each day for information in those files.

The UCC Section maintains more than 800,000 financing statements that are filed by secured parties, which may include attorneys and banking institutions.