

NORTH ALABAMA TRAINS

The history of Alabama and the development of its railroads are deeply intertwined. Beginning with the 1832 opening of the Tuscumbia Railway in what is now North Alabama's Colbert County, the state's railroads solved transportation problems and created opportunities for schemers and legitimate businessmen alike. Over the next century, railroads tied the various parts of the state together, connecting Alabama to the rest of the nation.

Cotton dominated Alabama commerce in the antebellum period and river transport funneled much of it to the port of Mobile. North Alabama planters could use the Tennessee River to reach New Orleans, but Muscle Shoals, near Tuscumbia, formed a major barrier. This impediment prompted construction of the Tuscumbia Railway as a route around the shoals. The first two miles of track opened on June 12, 1832. Initially powered by horses, this pioneering line soon operated the first steam locomotive west of the Alleghenies, the Fulton. The Tuscumbia became part of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, which completed its line between Chattanooga and Memphis in 1858.

The Civil War brought about massive change on Alabama's railroads. The Memphis & Charleston (M&C) initially moved Confederate troops and supplies but was largely dismantled in 1861 and 1862 so that its rails and equipment could be used elsewhere in the South and to prevent their use by Union forces. The M&O, A&F, and M&WP participated in the first large-scale troop movement in history. Following the Battle of Shiloh in 1862 in southwest Tennessee, Union general Don Carlos Buell began marching toward Chattanooga, in southeast Tennessee, alongside the ruined M&C.

To counter this, Confederate General Braxton Bragg used these three railroads, along with others in Georgia, to move 25,000 troops and supplies from Tupelo, Mississippi, to the Chattanooga area (a distance of almost 300 miles) in less than a week, arriving well ahead of Buell. As a result of heavy usage, minimal maintenance, and Union raids, particularly those led by Col. Abel Streight (1863), Maj. Gen. Lovell H. Rousseau (1864), and Gen. James H. Wilson (1865), the state's railroads were largely decimated at war's end.

Prior to the war, geologists had confirmed that the area around present-day Birmingham contained large deposits of iron ore and coal, but they were worthless without transportation to an industrial center. Supporters of the A&TR lobbied for Chattanooga as that center, but Alabamians Frank Gilmer and John Milner, both of whom had learned railroading on the A&F, envisioned Jones Valley in central Alabama as that industrial base, with a Montgomery-Decatur railroad to serve it. They chartered the Alabama Central Railroad (AC) in 1854, but A&TR backers and the Civil War stalled the project. After the war, Milner reorganized the AC as the South & North Railroad (S&N) and finally began construction in 1869.

The company had reached within 66 miles of Decatur in North Alabama when a lack of money to pay bond interest stopped the work. Railroad contractor John Stanton and other A&TR backers schemed to take control of the S&N, but a last-minute infusion of cash from Kentucky-based Louisville & Nashville Railroad (L&N) rescued the S&N and laid rail to Decatur by 1872. There, it connected with another L&N-controlled line, the Nashville & Decatur, giving the expanding L&N its first entry into the state.

The Panic of 1893 drastically reshaped Alabama's railroads, primarily because of the failure of the Richmond Terminal holding company. Through a convoluted process, the Central Railroad and Banking Company's lines emerged as the Central of Georgia Railway (C of G) in 1895. The ETV&G and the Alabama Great Southern Railroad, successor



Map from 1888 by the Alabama Railroad Commissioners showing the North Alabama railroad network connecting to Birmingham in colored lines. (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.)

to the A&TR, were included in New York financier J. P. Morgan's new Southern Railway System, formed out of several Richmond Terminal lines in 1894. The L&N was not affected by the Richmond Terminal's collapse, but it instantly had a strong rival in the new Southern Railway. These two lines would dominate Alabama railroading for almost a century.

By 1910, the Alabama railroad map was largely complete, and the iron industry neared maturity as well. Alabama's major railroads fared reasonably well during most of the twentieth century, although federal control by the United States Railroad Administration during World War I dealt them a serious financial blow. The railroads also suffered financial setbacks during the Great Depression, but World War II spurred a recovery, and the state's railroads carried massive amounts of material and troops during the conflict.

The post-war era brought change and consolidation to the state's railroads. Diesel power replaced steam locomotives, and freight cars grew larger. An unexpected development was the rapid decline in passenger traffic in spite of large investments to re-equip existing passenger trains, such as The Crescent and The Panama Limited and to introduce new ones such as The Humming Bird. These trains remained attractive as sources of transportation throughout most of the 1950s, but a massive increase in the number of automobiles, the new Interstate Highway System, and the advent of jet airliners captured most intercity passenger business. A majority of passenger trains had been discontinued when the federally controlled Amtrak system assumed operation of a skeleton system in 1971. At first the Southern Railway was the only railroad serving Alabama that did not join Amtrak, continuing to run its renamed Southern Crescent until 1979, when it, too, joined Amtrak. Amtrak's Crescent, serving Anniston, Birmingham, and Tuscaloosa, is now the sole passenger train in the state.

Alabama's major railroads have been merged into larger companies, starting with Southern's acquisition of the C of G in 1963, eliminating most historic company names. CSX Transportation (1980) includes the former ACL, SAL, L&N, and Western of Alabama lines, and the Southern is now part of Norfolk Southern Corporation (1982). The BNSF Railway (1996) reaches Birmingham via the former St. Louis-San Francisco (Frisco) track, and the original M&O line into Mobile has been part of Canadian National Railway since 1998. Some smaller railroads remain, but many secondary lines have been abandoned.

Adapted from The Encyclopedia of Alabama, J. Lawrence Lee, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. www.encyclopediaofalabama.org

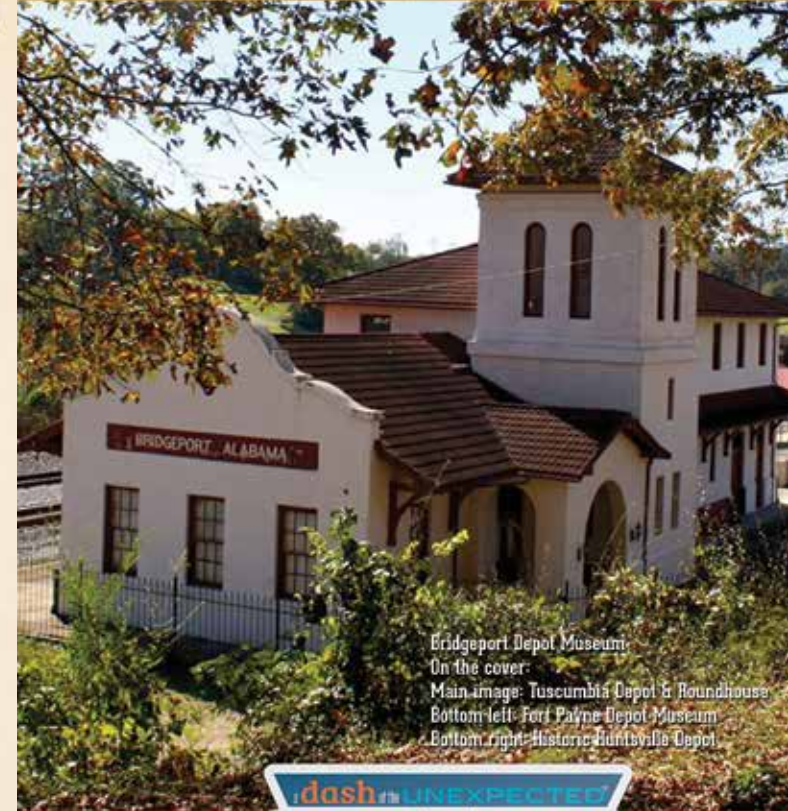
NORTH ALABAMA

1800'S - 1900'S

TRAIN DEPOTS

RAILWAY RELATED
DEPOTS • FESTIVALS • MUSEUMS
MARKERS • TRAIN RIDES

North Alabama TRAIN DEPOTS TRAIL



Bridgeport Depot Museum
On the cover:
Main image: Tuscumbia Depot & Roundhouse
Bottom left: Ford Payne Depot Museum
Bottom right: Historic Huntsville Depot



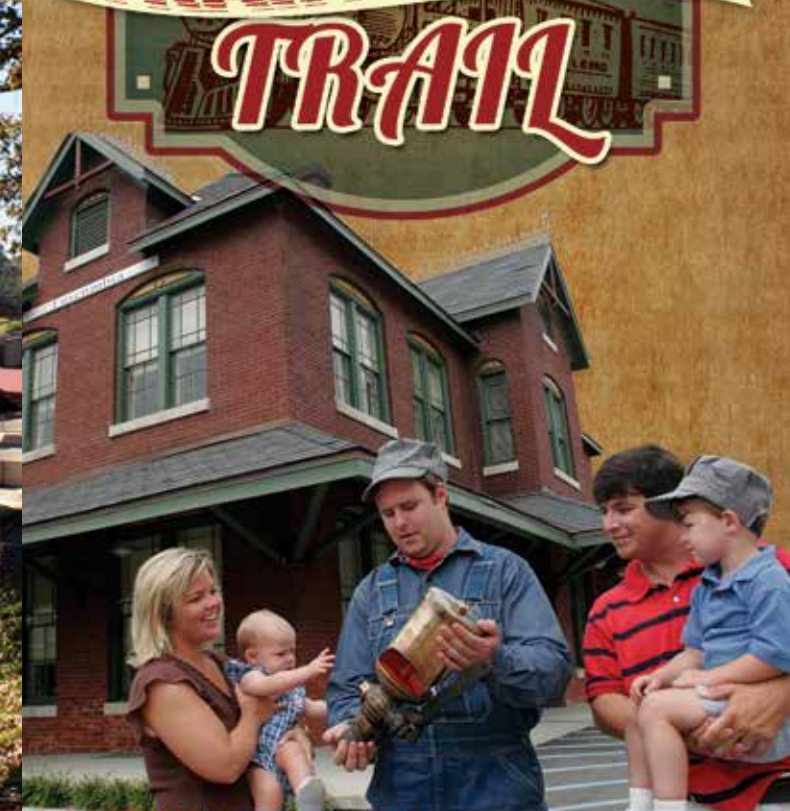
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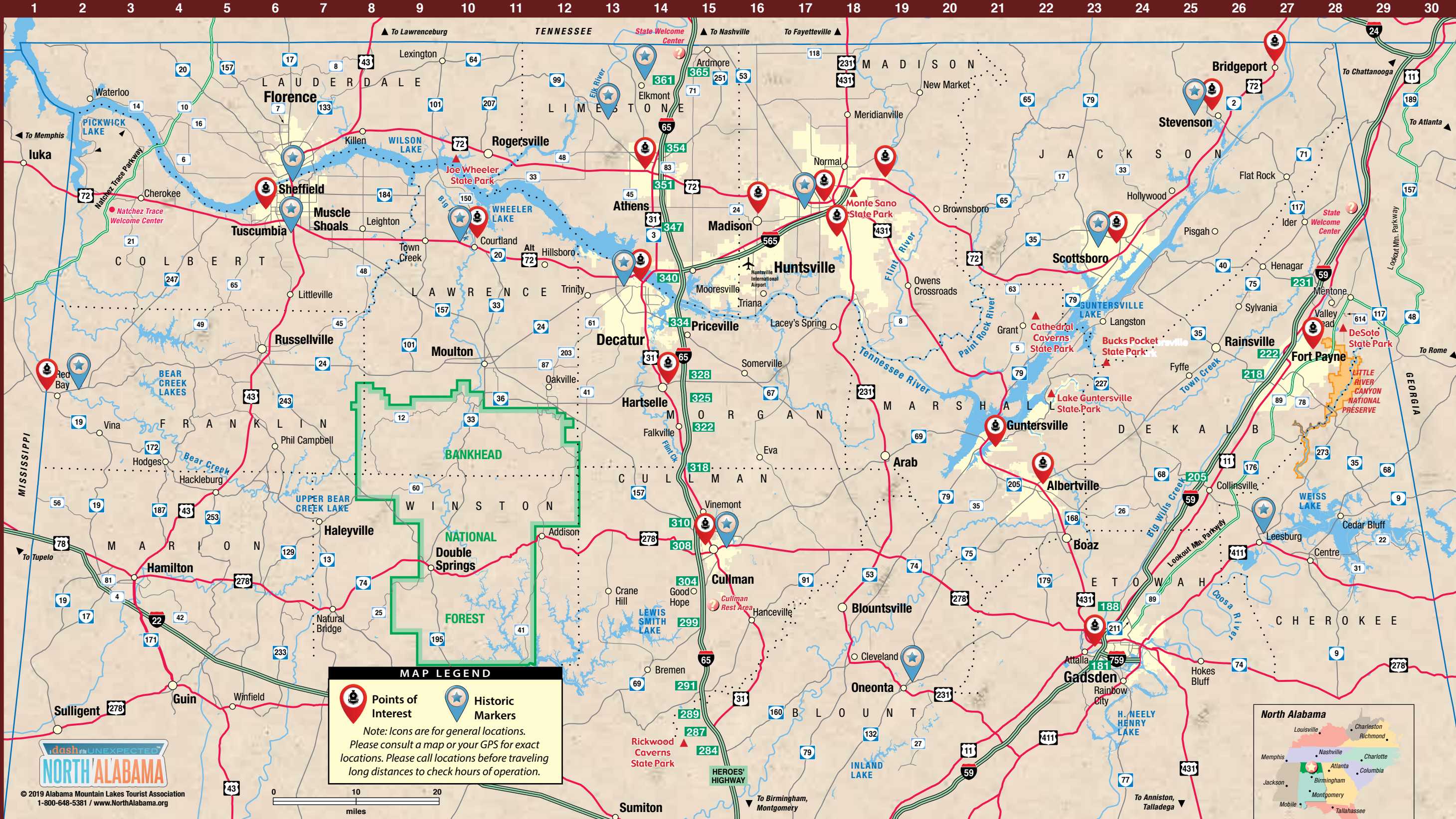


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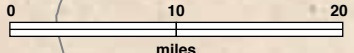
MAP LEGEND

- Points of Interest
- Historic Markers

Note: Icons are for general locations. Please consult a map or your GPS for exact locations. Please call locations before traveling long distances to check hours of operation.



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HISTORIC DEPOTS

Albertville Train Depot (I-22)

221 E Main St, Albertville; (256) 891-8279

The train depot is one of only two buildings in Albertville on the National Register of Historic Places. The Albertville Depot, also known as L&N Railroad Depot, was built by the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway in 1892, one year after the town was incorporated. The depot is one of the only structures in Albertville to survive the tornado of 1908. Passenger service ended in the 1940s, although the depot remained in use for freight. Although the NC&StL was purchased by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in 1880, the two companies operated separately until 1957. The depot was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 20, 1975. The building was renovated for use as a senior center in the mid-1990s. A former L&N caboose houses the Albertville Museum.

Bridgeport Depot Museum & Cultural Center (A-27)

116 Soulard Square; (256) 495-4020.

The museum is home to railroad memorabilia as well as Native American and Civil War artifacts. Items in the museum's collection date back to 1807. Constructed in 1917, today's depot is the fourth built on this site and is operated by the City of Bridgeport. Depot is on the National Register of Historic Places. Open: Th-F 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Sa 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Su 12 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Cullman County Museum & Depot (K-15)

304 First Avenue N.E., just off Hwy. 31; (256) 739-1258; email dgreen@cullmanal.gov

The early settlers of Cullman came to the area because of the railroad. John Cullmann the founder of this community was an agent for the railroad and brought in German settlers to support and be supplied by the railroad. The Depot was built in 1913 at a cost of \$6,000 in a Pueblo style with Moorish influences. It was placed on the National Historical Registry in 1976. The restored waiting area contains several display cases featuring railroad artifacts. Open during regular business hours. Admission is free.

Decatur Historic Union Depot (F-14)

701 Railroad Street, Decatur; 256-565-3788; www.decaturlparks.com

The historic Decatur Union Passenger Depot was built by the Southern Railway in 1905 and is a symbol of the city's rich railroad heritage which extends back to the 1830s when the first railroad west of the Allegheny Mountains, the Tuscumbia, Courtland and Decatur railroad, was built. A union depot was the result of the joint use of the depot by two railroads,



Cullman County Depot in Cullman.

the Southern and the Louisville & Nashville railroads. The lobby itself now depicts a number of scenes and artifacts from Decatur businesses of the early 1900s which surrounded the depot. Other items of interest include the original ticket office, a model train layout, actual railroad signage, and a unique depot desk from the 1920s Tuscumbia depot. Open: M-F 10 a.m. to noon, 1 to 3 p.m. Please call ahead for weekend and holiday hours.

Fort Payne Depot Museum (G-28)

105 5th St., Fort Payne; (256) 845-5714

Museum features exhibits typical of the lifestyles of the late 1800s and the early 1900s. The museum features Native American pottery, basketry, tools, and clothing. Old Fort Payne Depot built by the Alabama Great Southern Railroad in 1891. Hours: W, Th, F 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; doors close at 3:45 p.m. Admission.

Guntersville Depot (Outside viewing only) (I-21)

Off Blount Avenue on Greenwood Street; tours by appointment and to make an appointment you must contact Betty Jones at 256-571-7560.

In 1847 the Alabama legislature launched a project to connect the Tennessee River with the Coosa River with a railway from Guntersville to Gadsden. Work on the project stopped in 1861 because of the Civil War but resumed after the conclusion of the conflict. It was during this time the Guntersville Depot was built. The first scheduled passenger trip from Guntersville was in October 1892. The Guntersville train depot was dedicated as a historic site in 2000.



Fort Payne Depot Museum.

Historic Hartselle Depot (H-14)

110 Railroad St. SW, Hartselle; (256) 773-4370

Built in 1914, it was restored by community. Historical displays have been provided by the Hartselle Historical Society. It is home to Hartselle Area Chamber of Commerce. It plays host to many community and civic affairs. Hours: M-F 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Free.

Historic Huntsville Depot (D-17)

Downtown Huntsville; (256) 564-8100; www.earlyworks.com

Discover graffiti written by actual Civil War soldiers. There's even a "kids' playroom" complete with try-on costumes, train puzzles, and games. Open: Tu-Sa 9 a.m.-4 p.m., March-Dec. First two weeks of May, hours limited due to the WhistleStop Festival. Closed Jan.-Feb.

Stevenson Railroad Depot Museum (B-25)

Downtown; (256) 437-3012. An important Civil War railroad junction. Station now houses a collection of military, agricultural, Indian artifacts, railroad, and other local memorabilia. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Hours: M-F 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Closed on state holidays. Free.

Scottsboro Depot Museum (D-23)

230 N Houston St, Scottsboro; www.jchaweb.org/depot/depotindex.html

The Scottsboro Depot Museum houses a wide range of exhibits in the Scottsboro brick depot constructed by the Memphis and Charleston Railroad Company 1859-1860. It is thought that the same architect designed



Hartselle Depot.



Stevenson Railroad Depot Museum.

the Scottsboro Depot and Huntsville's pre-Civil War depot. The Scottsboro depot opened for business in January 1861 and serviced both passengers and freight until January 1892 when a separate passenger depot was opened in Scottsboro. It is Scottsboro and Jackson County's oldest business house and has been in continuous operation for 153 years. It is significant to the State since this building is one of only three pre-Civil War depots still standing in the State of Alabama. Open: Fridays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tuscumbia Depot & Roundhouse (D-6)

204 W. 5th St., Tuscumbia; 256-389-1357; www.colbertcountytourism.org, www.tuscumbiarailway.com (Main photo on front cover.)

Tuscumbia is known as America's First Frontier Railroad Town for being part of the first railroad west of the Appalachian Mountains., The 1888 restored passenger Depot was utilized by both the Memphis and Charleston and Southern Railway companies. In its early years, the depot was used often by Helen Keller and her teacher, Annie Sullivan. Today it is a museum dedicated to rail and train memorabilia, interactive train simulators, telegraph demonstrations and information about Tuscumbia's history. A Keller family carriage occupies one room of the museum. Admission. Call for open dates and times.



Historic Huntsville Depot.



Bridgeport's stunning Depot Museum



The recently restored Historic Union Depot in Decatur.

MUSEUMS



Alabama Veterans Museum, Athens.

Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives (D-14)

100 Pryor St., Athens; (256) 771-7578; alabamaveteransmuseum.com

The Alabama Veterans Museum and Archives, located in the 100 year old L&N Freight Depot, has over 2,000 artifacts, medals, uniforms and wartime equipment on display from the Revolutionary War until present day. There are also over 1,000 books and 200 videos in their library. An educational program encourages school children to tour and learn about the fight for our freedom. Open M-Sa 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Courtland Heritage Museum (C-19)

252 College St; (256) 637-2710, (256) 355-7875

The Museum contains exhibits on the 1st railroad west of the Appalachian Mountains, a book written in Courtland in 1832, the story of the Goliad (Texas) massacre in 1836, the battle of Courtland in 1862, the Courtland Army Air Force Base, Dinky Davis' bicycle, and lots of other local history.

Mary G. Hardin Center for Cultural Arts (N-23)

501 Broad St.; (256) 543-2787; www.culturalarts.org

The Hardin Center's only permanent exhibit is an elaborate 72-foot-long HO scale model of Gadsden in the 1940s, complete with working railroads. Six trains run through the miniature city of more than 125 historic buildings created by the Coosa Valley Model Railroad Club. The facility also includes three art galleries, Imagination Place Children's Hands-on Museum, and Gadsden Community School of the Arts. Hours: Mon-Sat 10 am-5 pm, Sun 1-5 pm. Admission \$8. Free for children under 24 months.

North Alabama Railroad Museum (D-18)

694 Chase Rd NE, Huntsville, AL 35811; (256) 851-6276; northalabamarailroadmuseum.com

At the North Alabama Railroad Museum, located in Chase, Alabama, just



North Alabama Railroad Museum.

east of Huntsville, you will find a facility reflecting a love of trains and a desire to preserve railroad history. The centerpiece of the museum features the Chase Depot, the smallest union depot in the country since it served more than one railroad when in service. If you visit the museum on a day when the train is running (see Train Ride Schedule on their website), you can ride a vintage train over the museum's own Mercury & Chase Railroad. Over thirty pieces of major rolling stock have been preserved including both freight and passenger equipment and three historic locomotives. Open: The museum's volunteer staff is present each Wednesday and Saturday morning for member work sessions and to assist visitors. The museum is also open by special appointment. Visitors may take a free self-guided tour and there are tour sheets and museum brochures in the waybill box located on the north side of the Chase Depot. Donations are welcomed.

Red Bay Museum (H-1)

400 4th St. SW, Red Bay, AL; (256) 356-8758; www.redbaymuseum.org

The museum showcases various displays of artifacts of Red Bay's past and also a display of items donated by Tammy Wynette and family and friends of Tammy. A featured display is The Red Bay Depot, destroyed by fire in the early 1990s., which includes one of the Red Bay signs that was on each end of the depot building, ticket counter, benches, scales, several telegraph instruments and many other items related to the depot and railroad. Open: Tu and Th 1:30-4:00 p.m. and by appointment. Admission.

TRAIN RELATED ACTIVITIES

Hartselle Depot Days Festival (H14)

Hartselle; (256) 773-4370, (800) 294-0692; hartsellechamber.com

A week of activities celebrating the railroad, est. 1870, culminates with a festival on the 3rd Saturday in September. Miss Depot Days pageant, 5K run, car, truck, and bike show, antique tractor and engine show, arts & crafts, children's art show, rides, music, food, and more. Always third Saturday in September. Sept 9-Sep 15, 2017. Free.

Whistle Stop Festival & Rocket City BBQ Cook-Off (D-17)

Huntsville; (256) 564-8100; www.whistlestopweekend.com

Two days of music, food, and fun on the grounds of the Historic Huntsville Depot! Live entertainment, family fun zone, and barbecue judging are highlights of this annual event. Held annually the first weekend in May. Admission.

Trains on Main Scavenger Hunt (D-16)

130 Park Square Lane, Madison, Inside the Hogan YMCA; 256.325.8317; www.trainsonmain.com

The Madison Chamber of Commerce, working in conjunction with the City of Madison and the Huntsville-Madison County Convention & Visitors Bureau, have come up with a fun and educational way for tourists and residents to learn more about the history of downtown Madison. All will have fun finding eight bronze trains that have been permanently placed in various locations in Historic Downtown Madison. Stop by the Madison Chamber of Commerce or City Hall and pick up a clue card. Clues on the card provided by the Madison Station Historical Preservation Society will educate and inform each individual who sets out to find the trains. At the end of the scavenger hunt bring your clue card and findings back to the Madison Chamber of Commerce Office and pick up your prize. Share your success on social media @madisonalcc #trainsonmain.



SMALL-SCALE TRAIN RIDES

Sportsman Lake Park

Cullman Parks and Recreation Department (K-15)

1544 Sportsman Lake Rd, NW, Cullman; 256-734-3052; www.cullmanrecreation.org

Sportsman Lake Park is a scenic destination that a little something for everyone regardless of age. Located around a large shallow body of water teeming with fish and wildlife in downtown Cullman, is the perfect place for family gatherings at picnic tables, pavilions, and RV or tent camping. A fan favorite is the small-scale train wrapping around the lake. Kids of all ages will enjoy it and the 18 hole putt-putt golf course. Ride paddle boats, feed the fish, ride a bike, hike, or work out on fitness equipment.

Spring Park Tuscumbia (D-6)

Downtown Tuscumbia; (256) 383-0783,

(800) 344-0783; www.colbertcountytourism.org

Several amusements provide an excellent venue for young children to enjoy: a roller coaster, carousel and narrow gauge train that runs through the park (nominal fee for amusements). A breathtaking centerpiece of Spring Park is a large 51-jet fountain that shoots water more than 150 feet into the air.

Noccalula Falls Park (M-23)

Hwy. 211; (256) 549-4663, [campground \(256\) 543-7412](http://campground(256)543-7412); www.cityofgadsden.com

A favorite attraction at Noccalula Falls Park is their C.P. Huntington Train.

The train operates daily and takes visitors on a scenic one mile ride in



and around the park. Unlimited train rides included in park admission. Park also includes a 90-foot waterfall with canyon, nature trails, botanical garden, and pioneer village, Call for hours. Admission.

North Alabama Railroad Museum (D-18)

694 Chase Rd NE, Huntsville, AL 35811; (256) 851-6276; northalabamarailroadmuseum.com

Regular excursions are run over the entire length of their line to make a 10 mile round trip. These trips last a little over 1 hour. Shorter trips last approximately 35 minutes. Please check website for train schedule.

RESTAURANTS

Freight House Restaurant & Catering

200 Railroad St. SW, Hartselle; 256-773-4600; www.freighthousecatering.com

The Freight House Restaurant is a modern southern restaurant found in downtown Hartselle adjacent to the historic passenger depot. It is located in the remodeled 101-year-old former L & N loading depot where guests may hear passing trains and witness a unique union of the past and present. A menu is posted on their website. Event center and catering available. Open Su-Wed 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Th 11 a.m.-8 p.m., F-Sa 11 a.m.-9 p.m.



HISTORIC MARKERS

Historic Oneonta L & N Railroad Depot (N-20)

Location: 2nd Street South ¼ mile south of Alabama Highway 75, Oneonta, Ala. Coordinates: N 33° 56.664 W 086° 28.548, 33.9444 -86.4758

Erected 2010 by Alabama Tourism Department and the City of Oneonta.

Tennessee, Alabama & Georgia Railway (J-27)

Location: 3595 AL-273, Leesburg, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 13.338 W 085° 43.439, 34.2223 -85.72398333

Erected by Cherokee County Historical Society.

Battle of Sulphur Creek Trestle (B-13)

Location: Elkmont Road/North Jefferson Street (State Highway 127) south of Upper Fort Hampton Road (County Road 49), Elkmont, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 54.683 W 086° 59.3, 34.91138333 -86.98833333

Erected 1982 by Limestone County Historical Society.

Old Railroad Bed (D-7)

Location: Ashe Blvd., Sheffield, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 46.764 W 087° 40.032, 34.7794 -87.6672

Sponsored by the Old Railroad Bridge Company and Colbert County Historical Landmarks Foundation.

Old Railroad Bridge (D-7)

Location: N. Broad St., Sheffield, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 46.818 W 087° 40.06, 34.7803 -87.66766666

Sponsored by the Old Railroad Bridge Company and Colbert County Historical Landmarks Foundation 2010

Tuscumbia Railroad - First Railroad West of Alleghenies (D-7)

Location: U.S. Hwy 43 Coordinates: Coordinates: 34° 43.951'N, 87° 42.309'W

Erected by Alabama Historical Commission.

Cullman Railroad Depot (L-15)

Location: 2nd Ave. NE, Cullman, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 10.774 W 086° 50.687, 34.17956666 -86.84478333

Restoration began in February 1991, funded by donations from Cullman County Historical Society, citizens of Cullman County, and public grants. Added to the National Register of Historic Places June 17, 1976.

Red Bay Depot & Hotel (G-2)

Location: 2nd St. SE and 4th Ave. S (Alabama Route 24), Red Bay, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 26.486 W 088° 8.701, 34.44143333 -88.14501666

The last train rolled through Red Bay in 1990. Plans were in process to move and preserve the depot when it mysteriously burned.

Scottsboro Railroad Depot (D-23)

Location: Maple Avenue near N Houston Street, Scottsboro, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 40.506 W 086° 2.214, 34.6751 -86.0369

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998

Stevenson Depot and Hotel (B-25)

Location: West Main Street (State Highway 117), Stevenson, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 52.074 W 085° 50.4, 34.8679 -85.84

Listed on The National Register of Historic Places May 13, 1974.

Erected by Alabama Historical Commission.

Early Roads / One of the South's First Railroads 1832 (D-10)

One of the South's First Railroads / Early Roads

Location: In front of Old Train Depot, past Square Park in Courtland, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 39.968 W 087° 18.627, 34.66613333 -87.31045

Erected 1994 by the Courtland Historical Foundation and the Town of Courtland.

End of One of the South's First Railroads / Early Roads (B13)

Tenn. & Ala. Central Railroad

Elkmont, Alabama / Tenn. & Ala. Central Railroad

Location: County Road 49 east of Railroad Street, Elkmont, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 55.75 W 086° 58.383, 34.92916666 -86.97305

Erected 2005 by Elkmont Town Council & Limestone County Historical Society.

Passenger Depot (D-17)

Location: Church St., Huntsville, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 44.064 W 086° 35.454, 34.7344 -86.5909

National Register of Historic Places 1971

Erected 1978 by Alabama Historical Association.

First Railroad West of Allegheny Mountains (F-14)

Location: at the intersection of Wilson Street Northeast (U.S. 72) and Harborview Drive Northeast, Decatur, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 36.873 W 086° 58.999, 34.61455 -86.98331666

Erected 1952 by Alabama Historical Association.

Old Decatur Historic District/Historic Depot (F-14)

The Battle for Decatur 7 - Two Bridges Across The Tennessee River

Location: 701 Railroad St. NW, Decatur, Ala. Coordinates: N 34° 36.813 W 086° 59.177, 34.61355 -86.98628333

Erected by City of Decatur.