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 1815, 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

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.
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.

### DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

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.

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 Secretary of 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.

### ALABAMA SECRETARIES OF STATE

Minimum requirements for the job are that the Secretary of State must be at least 25 years old, 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
2. Thomas A. Rodgers 1819-1821
3. James J. Pleasants 1821-1824
4. James I. Thornton 1824-1825
5. Edmund A. Webster 1834-1836
6. Thomas B. Tunstall 1840-1840
7. William Garrett 1842-1846
8. Vincent M. Benham 1852-1857
9. James H. Weaver 1860-1865
10. Patrick H. Brittan 1866-1867
11. Albert S. Elmore 1870-1872
12. David L. Dalton 1873-1874
13. Micah Taul 1876-1876
14. Charles A. Miller 1876-1876
15. Jobes J. Parker 1876-1877
16. Patrick Ragland 1876-1877
17. Neander H. Rice 1878-1876
18. Rufus K. Boyd 1876-1877
19. William W. Screws 1878-1882
20. Ellis Pheian 1882-1886
22. Joseph D. Barron 1886-1886
23. James K. Jackson 1884-1884
24. Robert P. McDavid 1888-1903
25. J. Thomas Heflin 1903-1904
26. Edmund R. McDavid 1904-1907
27. Frank N. Julian 1907-1910
29. John Purdy 1915-1915
30. Albert S. Elmore 1915-1915
31. Sidney Herbert Blan 1921-1923
32. John Marvin Brandon 1923-1923
33. Pete Bryant Jamaran, Jr. 1931-1931
34. David Howell Turner 1931-1931
35. John H. Merrill 1931-1935
36. David Howell Turner 1935-1939
37. John Marvin Brandon 1939-1943
38. David Howell Turner 1943-1944
40. Bettye Frink 1959-1963
41. Agnes Baggett 1963-1967
42. Mabel Randers Amos 1967-1975
43. Agnes Baggett 1975-1979
44. Don Siegelman 1979-1987
45. Glen Browder 1987-1988
46. Fred Crawford 1988-1989
49. Jim Bennett 1993-1995
52. Jim Bennett 2011-2015
53. John H. Merrill 2015-

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 | 334-242-5334 |
| Lands & Trademarks | 334-242-5325 |