
A. Foundation Statement

The National Park Service (NPS) publication “Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan,” prepared in August of 2007, describes the Foundation Statement of a NHA Management Plan (see page 11) as follows:

“A foundation statement is a formal declaration of the heritage area’s core mission. It provides guidance for the rest of the planning process and later project implementation. It defines the basic foundations of the heritage area – its purpose, vision, mission and goals. In many cases, the foundation statement builds upon and consolidates any previous work done before designation and the contents of the authorizing legislation. Completion of the foundation statement generally occurs in Phase 2 with partner and stakeholder involvement. However, the initial collection of information for the foundation can occur in Phase 1 as part of the ‘planning to plan’ process.”

To develop the Foundation Statement, a review of the authorizing legislation for the heritage area is necessary to understand its purpose and components. It is also instructive to review the feasibility study, previous plans for the area, and any other existing information to identify information that the planning process can build upon. The initial review of information for the Foundation Statement should also identify any information gaps that should be filled to complete components of the Management Plan and to complete the appropriate environmental analysis for NEPA and NHPA compliance. In short, preparation of the Foundation Statement makes a connection between information that is already provided in earlier documents and information that needs to be included in a the Management Plan.

D1. PURPOSE OF THE MSNHA

The federal legislation creating the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area lists the following six purposes for the MSNHA:

- (1) to preserve, support, conserve, and interpret the legacy of the region represented by the Heritage Area as described in the feasibility study prepared by the National Park Service;*
- (2) to promote heritage, cultural, and recreational tourism, and to develop educational and cultural programs for visitors and the general public;*
- (3) to recognize and interpret important events and geographic locations representing key developments in the growth of the United States, including the Native American, Colonial American, European American, and African American heritage;*
- (4) to recognize and interpret the manner by which the distinctive geography of the region has shaped the development of the settlement, defense, transportation, commerce, and culture of the region;*
- (5) to provide a cooperative management framework to foster a close working relationship with all levels of government, the private sector, and the local communities in the region to identify, preserve, interpret, and develop the historical, cultural, scenic, and natural resources of the region for the educational and inspirational benefit of current and future generations; and*
- (6) to provide appropriate linkages between units of the National Park System and communities, governments, and organizations within the Heritage Area.*

Based upon a review of the Background Study prepared in 2008, which entailed over twenty public meetings throughout the Heritage Area, as well as subsequent public meetings and field work

conducted as part of this management planning process, the six stated purposes within the federal legislation are deemed valid and reaffirmed for this Management Plan.

D2. VISION FOR THE MSNHA

At the time of its preparation, which was prior to the Heritage Area's federal designation, it was hoped that the 2008 Background Study could serve as the Management Plan for the MSNHA. While that wish did not come to fruition, the study was rooted in over twenty public meetings throughout the Heritage Area, and the study's stated Vision warrants serious consideration. A key paragraph on page 15 of the study describes the Vision for the MSNHA as follows:

"In the years to come, the Muscle Shoals will successfully package its cultural and natural resource heritage into appealing promotional efforts that will make it a major destination for heritage tourists. It is expected that the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area will foster local pride and encourage mutually beneficial partnerships among governmental, non-profit and private entities which share common heritage-related goals. Many new and expanded educational programs, interpretive centers, museums, art centers and festivals will celebrate and interpret the region's heritage for a growing number of visitors."

This segment of the original Vision statement is generally comprehensive in nature, consistent with the authorizing federal legislation, and has been reaffirmed through the public meetings conducted to date for this management planning effort. The only component of the appropriate Vision for the MSNHA that may be insufficiently emphasized is the preservation and enhancement of historic and natural resources tied to the key themes of the Heritage Area. Consequently, the Background Study's stated Vision above shall be supplemented by the following sentence per this Management Plan:

The Heritage Area's development will result in the preservation and sensitive enhancement of numerous cultural resources related to the MSNHA's primary themes, including (but not limited to) environmental resources linked to the Tennessee River, archeological sites tied to Native American heritage, and historic structures, districts and objects that help to define the heritage and character of the MSNHA.

D3. MISSION FOR THE MSNHA

The Mission for the MSNHA stated on page 15 of the 2008 Background Study is very concise and consists of a single sentence, as follows:

"Present, preserve and promote the cultural heritage resources of the Muscle Shoals region."

Because the terms "purpose" and "mission" are essentially synonyms of one another, for the purposes of this Management Plan, they will be considered identical. Rather than being repetitive, the MSNHA's mission (or purpose) can be reviewed above under the heading of "Purpose of the MSNHA."



Mooreville is an early-19th century village that has remained remarkably well preserved.

D4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE MSNHA

Based upon the federal legislation creating the MSNHA, the Background Study previously completed, and the public input obtained to date for this management planning process, the following set of goals and objectives are suggested for subsequent testing with the public and refining:

Goal 1: Develop the MSNHA's local coordinating entity – the University of North Alabama's Muscle Shoals Regional Center – into a highly-effective organization capable of successfully implementing the Management Plan once completed.

- Objective 1-A: Establish a leadership program to help maintain the effectiveness of current board members, committees, and staff for the MSNHA, and to identify and groom potential future leaders.
- Objective 1-B: Secure dependable funding sources both to match available federal funding and to sustain the MSNHA in the long-term.
- Objective 1-C: Involve a broad cross-section of MSNHA stakeholders at all levels of the organization to benefit from a diverse set of perspectives and to build a strong grassroots foundation of support.
- Objective 1-D: Develop a network of partner sites, attractions, and events that meet minimum standards of quality and contribute toward the MSNHA in return for being included within the promotion of the Heritage Area.
- Objective 1-E: Establish a promotional program that not only markets the Heritage Area and its sites, attractions, and events, but that also markets the MSNHA as an entity.

Goal 2: Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MSNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.

- Objective 2-A: Support and/or sponsor research into the various themes associated with the MSNHA.
- Objective 2-B: Establish an oral history program utilizing high school and/or college students within the MSNHA to record histories from individuals that address the Heritage Area's primary themes.
- Objective 2-C: Create an educational curriculum within the Heritage Area's grade schools and high schools to teach the MSNHA's primary themes, which might be supplemented with field trips.
- Objective 2-D: Develop one or more interpretive centers for the MSNHA. Also, existing or planned facilities that are separate initiatives by other entities might be leveraged to achieve this objective.
- Objective 2-E: Develop a series of theme-based tours for walking, cycling and driving. Some tours might be at the community scale, while others are at the Heritage Area scale. Also, a variety of media might be utilized for interpretation, including printed maps/brochures and telecommunications.
- Objective 2-F: Create a series of educational and interpretive materials telling the MSNHA's story. In addition to more conventional materials, such as brochures, a coffee table book on the Heritage Area's resources and stories might be developed, as well as web-based materials.
- Objective 2-G: Program sites/attractions throughout the MSNHA with regular or periodic living history demonstrations and events.

Goal 3: *Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area's numerous natural and cultural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MSNHA's three primary themes.*

- Objective 3-A: Adopt a set of minimum standards of quality to insure "tourism readiness" for partner sites and attractions, as well as for an incentive to "emerging" sites and attractions.
- Objective 3-B: Provide technical assistance and grants to partner and emerging sites and attractions.
- Objective 3-C: Work with existing land trust organizations and willing land owners to protect lands through conservation easements.
- Objective 3-D: Work as a catalyst to establish a historic preservation organization to work with willing property owners to protect historic resources through facade easements.
- Objective 3-E: Provide technical assistance to individual communities within the MSNHA to establish public policy tools to help preserve natural and cultural resources and to reinforce community character.

Goal 4: *Serve as a catalyst for the development of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities.*

- Objective 4-A: Work with one or more partnering entities to develop a greenway system along the Tennessee River linking the riverfront with key sites and existing greenway systems.
- Objective 4-B: Once the greenway system is expanded, establish a program for individuals and groups to "adopt" segments of the greenway for on-going maintenance and beautification efforts.
- Objective 4-C: Work with one or more partnering entities to develop additional visual and physical access to the river for the purpose of outdoor recreation, including fishing, hunting, boating, canoeing, bird watching, and similar activities tied to the river and its ecosystem.
- Objective 4-D: Develop promotional and interpretive materials related to outdoor recreation, such as a trail guide book, a map highlighting access points to the river, information on the plant and animal species of the river and adjacent lands, and similar materials.
- Objective 4-E: Encourage and promote the development of outdoor recreational businesses and services, such as outfitter stores, canoe rental and drop-off/pick-up services, and a network of outdoor guides who will take customers hiking, cycling, fishing, canoeing, and similar outdoor recreational activities.

Goal 5: *Encourage and assist in community enhancement and the development of tourism "infrastructure," such as dining, lodging and tourism-oriented retail.*

- Objective 5-A: Provide technical assistance for public policy strategies to enhance strip commercial corridors and to revitalize historic downtowns and neighborhoods.
- Objective 5-B: Encourage the development of dining, entertainment, and lodging that would appeal to cultural tourists visiting the MSNHA.
- Objective 5-C: Encourage the development of retail closely linked to the Heritage Area, such as authentic regional products associated with the culture and an outfitters store for outdoor recreation.

Goal 6: Market and promote the Heritage Area through a number of vehicles to increase heritage tourism as a means of economic development.

- Objective 6-A: Promote existing special events tied to the history, cultural traditions, and themes of the Heritage Area, and help in the creation and promotion of new such events.
- Objective 6-B: Develop a MSNHA website targeting tourists that highlights the primary themes and attractions, features tours tied to the Heritage Area themes and a schedule of events, and that includes links to other relevant websites.
- Objective 6-C: Utilize social networking systems to promote the Heritage Area.
- Objective 6-D: Utilize conventional means of promotion, such as print ads, brochures, and maps to promote the MSNHA and its various attractions.



The Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area has already made substantial progress with various marketing efforts, including the development of a website.

B. Interpretive Theme Structures and Stories

E1. HISTORY OVERVIEW

Three dominant themes characterize the history of the six-county area of the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area: Native-American history, the influence of the Tennessee River, and local contributions to American popular music. Several sub-themes have also been identified, including a plantation economy and the Civil War. The river is credited for the fertile bottomland that supported vast cotton plantations and also made North Alabama a strategic location during the Civil War. The river is the thread that weaves together the major and minor themes, encouraging Indian and European-American habitation, providing a potential inland waterway across 600 miles, as well as a source of hydropower, and inspiring uniquely American musical traditions.

Summary of Interpretive Themes

Theme 1: Native American Heritage

- Paleoindian Period
- Archaic Period
- Woodland Period
- Mississippian Period
- Historic Period

Theme 2: The Tennessee River

- The Plantation Economy
- The Civil War
- Community Development
- Industry & Hydroelectric Development

Theme 3: Music

- W.C. Handy and the Blues
- The Recording Industry Takes Root

E2. NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE

Paleoindian Period

Human habitation of present day North America dates to what archaeologists call the Paleoindian period (13,000 - 8,500 BC). This period overlapped with the end of the Ice Age, when water was frozen as ice across the Bering Strait, creating a land bridge for the migration of people and animals from the Asian continent. These people migrated east and south over several millennia. The earliest evidence of human habitation in the present-day Southeast region dates from around 9,500 BC. At the time, the climate of present-day Alabama was comparable to that of southern Canada or the northern tier states. While little archaeological evidence remains from the Paleoindian period, some of the highest concentrations of Paleoindian stone tools have been found in North Alabama. These included flint arrowheads and spear points used for hunting megafauna, such as mastodon and mammoth, and smaller species still extant, such as rabbit and deer. It is clear from archaeological evidence during the Ice Age that Paleoindians did not live in permanent structures or have domesticated plant or animal species. Bands, or families, of between 25 and 50 individuals hunted and gathered across the region.

The Paleoindian diet relied on massive game herds such as bison. These people followed the bison's seasonal migration path, which extended from the natural salt licks on the present-day Cumberland River in Tennessee to grazing lands on the Mississippi River. The animals instinctively found the most efficient path through challenging topography. The approximate mid-point of this path was in present-day North Alabama, from where Paleoindian hunting parties seem to have originated, based on weapon artifacts.

While Paleoindians were nomadic, the density of various fluted, stone tools across North Alabama suggests the region was something of a gathering center. Hand-worked stone points found across the continent share similarities and are grouped under the term Clovis, after the discovery of such tools in present-day Clovis, New Mexico. Artifacts found at Dust Cave near present-day Florence, Alabama, have been carbon-dated to around 8,500 BC, and more than 200 Clovis points were found at what is

known as the Quad site, on the Tennessee River. The river was a source of fresh water for the Paleoindians and their game, making the region an ideal location as a staging area for organized hunts.

Archaic Period

As the climate warmed and biodiversity increased, the landscape of North Alabama changed. The increase in natural resources allowed for proliferation of human populations, which increased the examples of surviving artifacts from what is now referred to as the Archaic period (8,500 – 1,000 BC). Archaic people left evidence of a changing diet, including mounds of mussel shells along streams and rivers in North Alabama. They also augmented their tool kits to include weights for fishing nets, axes, and pipes and expanded their accoutrement supplies to include large cooking vessels and ornamental materials. Early Archaic sites, from 8,500 - 6,000 BC, are numerous across North Alabama.

During the next two millennia, wide-ranging movement of Archaic people is evident in tools of differing stone types found hundreds of miles from their geological points of origin. Increased refuse, such as mussel shells, suggests increased populations. Skeletal remains with embedded weapon points indicate the earliest incidents of warfare among the Middle Archaic peoples. It is thought that a warmer, dryer climate during this period contributed to competition for resources among the increased populations.

The climate stabilized during the Late Archaic period (4,000 - 1,000 BC), as evidenced by an increase in the number of archaeological sites found along the Tennessee, Tombigbee, and other Alabama Rivers. Artifacts at these sites indicate a progressive refinement of tools and cookware over the course of human habitation in the region. For example, pottery remnants in Alabama date to 1,500 BC. Additionally, the Late Archaic peoples developed an extensive trade network around the greater Southeast region. This wide-ranging travel, however, is coupled with the introduction of horticulture, which eased the necessity of a nomadic existence for survival.

Woodland Period

The changes and developments over the Archaic period created more complex cultures, leading archaeologists to define a new epoch known as the Woodland Period, divided into Early, Middle, and Late sub-periods between 1,000 BC to 1,000 AD. Woodland people located camps along rivers in North Alabama, as they did elsewhere across the Southeast, decreasing their hunting range and the range of their trade networks. Thus, pottery styles became distinct to smaller areas. Mound-building in North Alabama dates to around 1,000 BC and became widespread across eastern North America during the Woodland Period.

The most striking development during this time warranted a new sub-division termed the Middle Woodland Period (AD 1 - 500). Expanding on the practice of mound-building, people of this period incorporated specific burial practices that for the first time included ornamental artifacts. Archaeologists refer to the resulting cultural development as a ceremonial burial complex. The earliest example is known as the Hopewell Ceremonial Complex discovered in the Ohio River Valley. The custom drifted south, reaching North Alabama in the Tennessee River Valley, where it was named the Copena Mortuary Complex. The name is a conflation of copper and galena (iron ore), as materials of these elements were commonly found at the sites. Both conical and platform mounds can be found in North Alabama, and artifacts at



The Bear Creek Mound in Colbert County on the Natchez Trace Parkway was built circa AD 1 – 1,000.

the sites indicate special rituals and feasts that did not occur in the surrounding villages. A platform mound was excavated at the Walling site in North Alabama.

At the small community of Oakville in Lawrence County, is a group of twenty mounds from the Middle Woodland Period, preserved today as the Oakville Indian Mounds Park and Museum, a state park of 83 acres. The site yielded roughly one thousand artifacts, showcased in the park's museum. The group of mounds includes the largest surviving ceremonial mound in Alabama. Twenty-seven feet in height, its base covers 1.8 acres, while its platform top covers an area of about one acre.

From AD 500 – 1,000, people of the Late Woodland Period distinguished themselves by an increase in tending crops, including maize and squash. Domestication of plant species influenced the development of storage vessels, evident in pottery artifacts found from this period. Mounds evolved from burial sites to become civic centers for region-wide gatherings.

Mississippian Period

Around AD 1,100, customs from the Mississippi River Valley became introduced in North Alabama. Archaeologists recognize the Mississippian culture as extending to AD 1,550. The period is distinguished by the construction of towns or homesteads. Such settlements occurred in river valleys where fertile bottomlands allowed for corn, bean, squash, and sunflower crops. The Mississippian diet also included game and wild flora. Skeletal remains found in Alabama indicate a generally healthful diet, but poor sanitation resulted in a notable infant mortality rate.

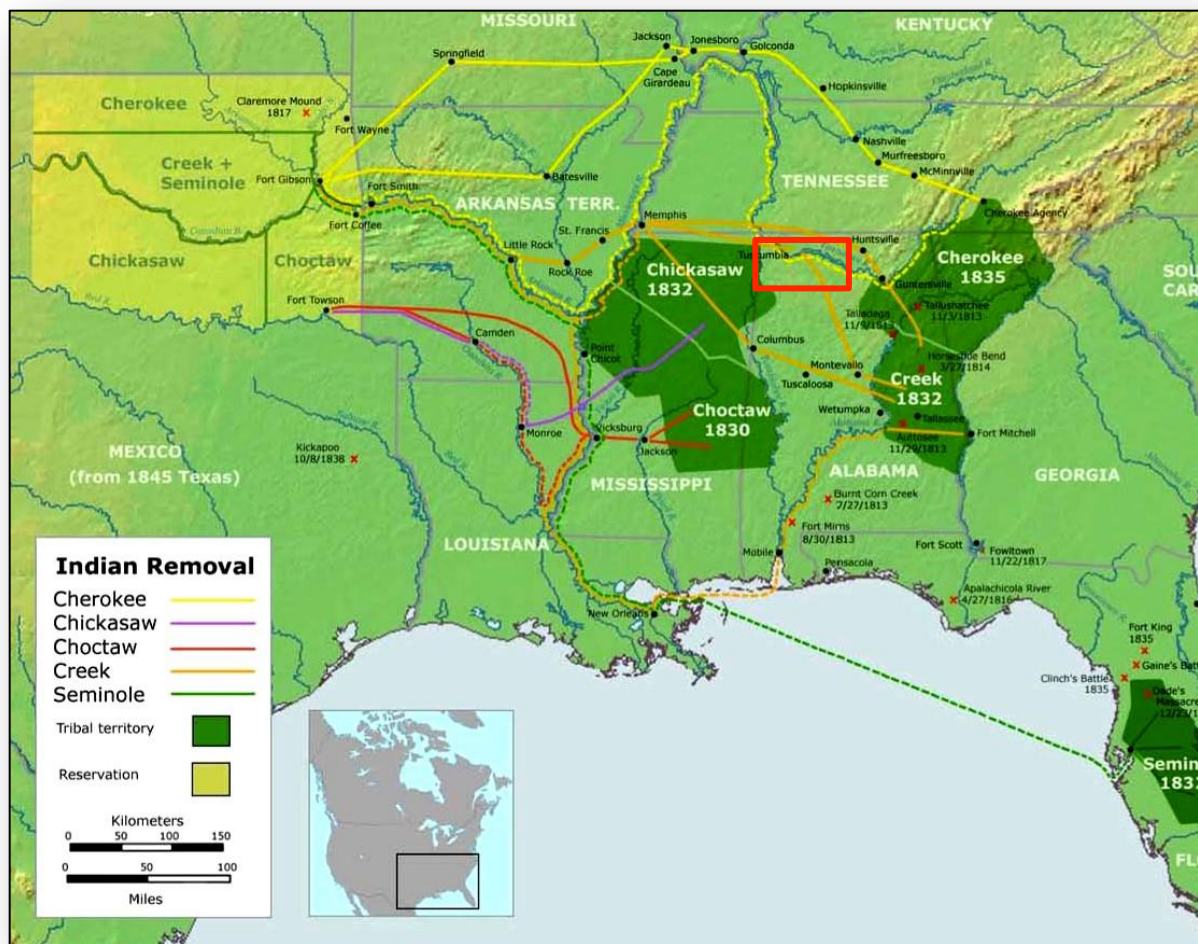
Archaeologists, supported by accounts of Spanish explorers of the sixteenth century, believe Late Mississippian societies were organized by chiefdoms. The rise of a hierarchical cultural structure among Mississippian people created a new dynamic of cooperation and competition among different chiefdoms. The result was an increase of violence, especially in smaller, less secure settlements. Excavations sites at the Koger's Island and Perry Sites north of Florence produced skeletons with evidence of clubbing, scalping, and mass burials. By contrast, very little similar evidence was found at larger settlements in other parts of Alabama.

Historic Period

The initial decline of Mississippian culture in Alabama began around 1450 from uncertain causes and was exacerbated when new diseases were introduced by Spanish exploration, namely of Hernando de Soto in 1540. The people we now refer to as Native Americans, known by such tribal names as Creek, Choctaw, and Cherokee, are descendants of Mississippian peoples. The Creek Nation, a confederacy of several groups, consisted of 9,000 people around 1680. This number grew to around 20,000 by the post-Revolutionary War period and was centered in east-central Alabama. By 1800, there were 15,000 Choctaw living across millions of acres of western Alabama and Mississippi. Cherokee settlements were traditionally located in the river valleys east of Alabama. By the end of the Revolutionary War, the Cherokee range had expanded into North Alabama as far west as Colbert County.

By the late-1700s, European-American settlers had been drawn westward, establishing permanent settlements in present-day states across the southeast region. Commerce between the southern frontier and east coast states required the development of reliable trade routes. In the late-eighteenth century, President Thomas Jefferson turned to the 500-mile path carved out millennia before by herds of bison. Over thousands of years, Native Americans had further etched out the trace. The path conveniently connected port towns in Kentucky and Tennessee with those along the Mississippi River. Jefferson ordered the improvement of the trace to accommodate American traders, as well as to prevent French control in the Mississippi River Valley. The Natchez Trace, extending 440 miles from Nashville, Tennessee, to Natchez, Mississippi, provided a reliable return route for traders who floated their products in keelboats down the river system. After unloading their products in New Orleans, they sold their boats and began the long walk home via the Natchez Trace, a trip that lasted three to four weeks. Inns and taverns soon appeared along the Trace to accommodate travelers. These included places like Buzzard Roost in Colbert County. At the present-day town of Cherokee, George Colbert, of mixed Scot-Choctaw heritage, operated a ferry where the Trace crossed the Tennessee River.

During the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, settlers were streaming over the Appalachian Mountains and entering Cherokee, Choctaw, and Creek tribal lands, often without regard for land treaties between the various tribes and the federal government. When state governments failed to uphold the land treaties, some tribes sent emissaries to Washington. The tribe most adept and successful at self-representation was the Cherokee Nation. The Cherokee had adapted to European-American cultural and political customs, developing a written language, adopting a constitution, and establishing a capitol city. Cherokee acculturation proved beneficial in prolonging their negotiations with federal officials well into the 1830s. The Choctaw were removed to lands west of the Mississippi River as early as 1831 and the Creeks were removed in 1834. The Cherokee were the last holdouts. However, President Andrew Jackson took advantage of dissension between the National Party and Treaty Party within the Cherokee Nation. Jackson tired of the tenacity of the National Party, representing the majority of Cherokee not inclined to leave their homeland. In 1835, he negotiated a \$5-million pay-off with the smaller Treaty Party. Beginning in May of 1838, U.S. troops forcibly removed 16,000 Cherokee from North Alabama and Georgia and southeastern Tennessee.



As this map illustrates, there were two key routes of Indian removal through the MSNHA (highlighted in red box). Cherokees transported by boats traveled the Tennessee River, while Creeks traveled by land from eastern portions of Alabama

Source: Wikimedia Commons (public domain)

The Cherokee Trail of Tears' "water route" was along the Tennessee River through North Alabama. A canal project to circumvent impassible shoals had begun on the river in 1831, but by 1837 had been abandoned. The shallow depth of the river at Muscle Shoals required disembarkment of the Cherokee

passengers from boats and continuation of the journey by train on the first railroad constructed west of the Appalachian Mountains, between Decatur and Tuscumbia. At Tuscumbia, the Cherokee boarded steamboats or keelboats to continue their exodus along the Tennessee River for Paducah, Kentucky.

See an overview of Native American cultural resources beginning on [page 59](#) of this report.

E3. THE TENNESSEE RIVER

As a major theme of the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area, the Tennessee River embodies the history of European-American settlement of the region, in addition to its Native American heritage. Westward pioneers began settling the area in the early-nineteenth century. The story of the river touches all aspects of life in North Alabama, from creating fertile soil for a lucrative plantation economy, to navigation of commerce, to energy development, and national defense. The Tennessee River historic theme has a number of sub-themes, including the plantation economy, the Civil War, community development, and industry and hydroelectric development.

The Tennessee River: The Plantation Economy

Alabama's earliest settlers came from the Carolinas and Virginia. They engaged in cotton farming, both large and small scale, in the fertile river valley. Lumber and cattle were among the other agricultural products shipping out of the region via steamboats and ferries. Various towns were established, competing with one another for status as a trading center. While the convenience of river transportation and fertile soil of this river valley attracted settlers, low water lines and shoals hindered travel on this particular stretch of the river. The cotton that many farmers cultivated in Morgan County had to be stored in warehouses on the riverbank, awaiting shipment to New Orleans until the water level was high enough to navigate the shoals. An 1830 survey estimated the cost of a canal around the shoals at \$1.4 million. The United States government gave the State of Alabama 400,000 acres to sell in order to raise the money for the canal. Work began in 1831 and was completed in 1836. Unfortunately, the project was doomed: during low water levels, boats could not reach the canal; during high levels, the canal was unnecessary.

In 1836, however, transportation through the region was improved by the construction of the Tuscumbia, Courtland and Decatur Railroad. This rail line, the first west of the Appalachians, provided incentives for growth, and Decatur became an industrial center. In 1853, a new railroad between Tuscumbia and Decatur was begun. In 1855, the Tuscumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad was purchased by the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, which built a rail bridge across the Tennessee River. Also in 1853, the Tennessee-Alabama Central Railroad connected Decatur to Nashville. The two railroads intersected at Decatur, making the city a major hub for the north-south and east-west line.

Alabama's chief agricultural commodity was cotton, sold in 500-pound-bale units, the bulk of which was shipped to Mobile. Between 1847 and 1859, not only had the cotton crop yield increased (from 438,324 to 704,406 bales), but the price per pound increased from 6.7 cents to 11.43 cents. The antebellum landscape of North Alabama evidenced the agricultural economy, with plantations and their impressive dwellings. Today, their remnants, smaller-sized acreage with extant plantation houses, are reminders of the former dependence on an agricultural economy, supported by the river through both fertile soils and navigation of agricultural products to market.

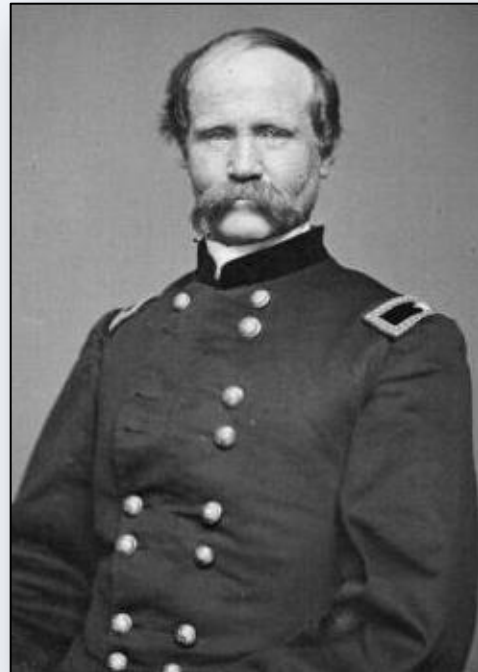
See an overview of resources related to the plantation economy beginning on [page 62](#) of this report.

The Tennessee River: The Civil War

The Tennessee River was of strategic importance to both the Union and Confederacy, and this six-county region changed hands several times during the Civil War. As a rail center, Decatur in particular became an important location during the war. The city was occupied at various times by both armies, first falling to the Union Army without a fight in 1862. Later in the year Union troops abandoned the city, destroying much of the railroad and the railroad bridge across the river. Local citizens managed to salvage some of the rail line between Decatur and Tuscumbia. The area was occupied again in 1864 by Union troops under General Grenville Dodge, who captured Decatur and built a pontoon bridge across the river. He ordered residents to leave the city and destroyed all its buildings that were not housing his troops or supplies. Remaining buildings included the Old State Bank, the Rhea-McEntire House, and the Dancy-Polk House.

On October 26, 1864, General Robert Granger received news that Confederate General John Bell Hood was approaching Decatur from the east. Granger moved 300 soldiers to the fortifications at Decatur, preparing to defend it. Hood's troops numbered approximately 30,000 men, far more than the 3,000 - 5,000 Union troops in Decatur. Over the course of two days, the two combatants engaged in skirmishes that resulted in nominal casualties. One of these skirmishes took place in the Northwest Neighborhood near the intersection of Vine and Washington Streets. Hood finally abandoned his goal to take Decatur and cross the Tennessee River. He circumvented Decatur, instead marching west and crossing at Florence, Alabama. This delay helped to concentrate sufficient Union troops in Tennessee to defeat Hood at the Battle of Nashville and force his retreat. The remnant of Hood's army crossed the Tennessee River at Florence on a pontoon bridge on its way to camps in Mississippi.

See an overview of resources related to the Civil War beginning on [page 65](#) of this report.



Union General Robert Granger was in charge of guarding the strategic river crossing at Decatur.

Source: public domain (copyright expired)

The Tennessee River: Community Development

Late-Eighteenth & Early-Nineteenth Centuries

The shoals of the Tennessee River provided Native Americans with a rich habitat, but they were obstacles of navigation for European-Americans in the nineteenth century. The Muscle Shoals were widely feared by settlers who traveled the river by keelboats and flatboats. Steamboat traffic was extremely perilous even during times of high water. Following the Civil War, the Muscle Shoals canal project of the 1830s was resumed, and engineers found the solid limestone beds of North Alabama highly suitable for carving out a permanent canal impervious to soil erosion. The goal of this project was to open the Tennessee River to steam navigation between Knoxville, Tennessee, and Paducah, Kentucky. It was the first major development of infrastructure with dramatic effects on the growth of the region.

Post-Civil War Prosperity

According to government statistics on commerce and transportation, Alabama's cotton-based economy rebounded rather quickly following the Civil War. The 1865-66 growing season yielded 429,102 bales of cotton, fetching 42.11 cents per pound. Additionally, the state began rapidly to diversify its economy in the late-nineteenth century, capitalizing on mineral deposits. Improved river navigation, as well as proliferating railroad lines during this period, created a transportation network for the natural resources of the region. The river influenced the growth of towns such as Tuscumbia, Florence, Decatur, Athens, Russellville and smaller communities like Hartselle, Leighton and St. Florian. While many towns were established before the Civil War, the height of their commercial prominence, as represented in their architectural heritage, occurred after the war. Athens, for instance, was founded in 1818, making it one of Alabama's oldest incorporated cities. Yet much of its noteworthy extant architecture dates to the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Late-Nineteenth & Early-Twentieth Centuries

The growth of the iron manufacturing industry caused the establishment of new towns, such as Sheffield and New Decatur (later renamed Albany). In 1887, the Decatur Land Improvement Company funded the establishment of a new city to the southeast of Old Decatur. The company hired architect Nathan Franklin Barrett to design this planned community and advertised it across the Midwest and Northeast. In these North Alabama towns, commercial districts blossomed during this period, especially at county seats. For example, the Colbert County courthouse was completed in 1881. The historic district surrounding the courthouse exemplifies the significance of a county seat as a commercial and cultural center and includes buildings of commercial, domestic, religious, and rail-related uses. Affluent residents built high-style examples of domestic architecture on the fringes of these business districts.

The development of river navigation and railroads continued to expand North Alabama's market for industrial and agricultural commodities. In kind, urban populations grew, and communities continued to build new post offices, public schools, universities, churches, commercial buildings, and residences. The growth of the region is clearly reflected in rising populations in each of the counties from the beginning to the mid-twentieth century. The population of Morgan and Lauderdale Counties doubled between 1900 and 1950, while Limestone, Colbert, Lawrence and Franklin Counties increased by over one-third.

Post-WWII Era

During the post-war boom, Alabama experienced tremendous demographic changes, as people flocked to cities for employment opportunities. The state's urban population grew by 57% during the war years and the post-war industrial development, coupled with throngs of returning soldiers, created a critical shortage of housing. The federal government encouraged innovative design for new housing construction, and entrepreneur Carl Strandlund created a model of steel construction and interior and exterior of porcelain-coated steel panels. His company's Lustron homes were advertised as low-maintenance, rust-proof, rodent-proof, and three-times stronger than balloon-frame homes. The Lustron Corporation received over 20,000 orders for the efficient, modern houses, but only 2,498 were built. Three of these innovative homes were built in the Muscle Shoals region.

See an overview of resources related to the community development beginning on [page 67](#) of this report.

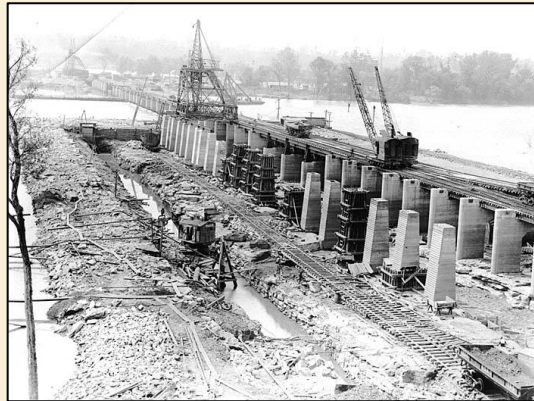
The Tennessee River: Industry and Hydroelectric Development

Wilson Dam & Early Hydroelectric Development

In the early-twentieth century, the river was the catalyst for another major development here. During this period, North Alabama cities benefited from hydroelectric developments on the Tennessee River. In Congress, former Confederate General Joseph Wheeler advanced the goal of a hydroelectric dam at Muscle Shoals in 1898. The bill had passed, but the project was never undertaken. During World War I, however, the government built Wilson Dam and two explosives-manufacturing plants at Muscle

Shoals. Dependable river levels resulted in the building of several new industries. President Woodrow Wilson approved the building of the dam to supply electricity to two nitrate plants for manufacture of ammunition and explosives for the war effort.

When the dam was in development, workers' communities were constructed. Construction of Village One began in 1918 by the U.S. Government to house personnel for the nearby Nitrate Plant #1. The village included 85 dwellings, a schoolhouse, and officers' barracks. The J.G. White Engineering Corporation designed the planned community of Craftsman and Spanish Colonial influenced dwellings with red tile roofs and stucco exteriors. Since the establishment of New Decatur in the late-1880s, this emerging commercial center provoked deep rivalries with Old Decatur, as Northerners migrated to the former. To help ease tensions, the new name Albany was adopted in 1916. Ultimately, the Tennessee River was the catalyst that brought together citizens of the two towns, in their common need for a bridge across the river, benefiting North Alabama as a region.



Fortunately for the MSNHA, the construction of the Wilson Dam and related federal projects were well documented with rich photography that helps with interpretation today. This photograph dates from 1919. Source: Wikimedia Commons (public domain)

Tennessee Valley Authority

The North Alabama region was the beneficiary of a major project via Roosevelt's New Deal program, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Created in 1933 as part of FDR's "First One Hundred Days," the TVA was intended to control flooding on the river while expanding opportunities for hydroelectric power and industry. While today TVA is mainly viewed as a producer of power, its original purpose was also aimed to improve the quality of life across a rural, often impoverished, region. This goal was multi-pronged and included flood control, conservation of natural resources, instruction in modern farming practices, fertilizer production, and improved navigation of the river - in addition to providing electricity. The river had long determined growth in North Alabama and the whole Tennessee Valley. It allowed for transportation of agricultural and industrial products. Yet, the river presented negative impacts, as evidenced in problematic navigation during low water. In the summer, the river was the source of malaria, transmitted by mosquitoes. In other areas, flooding wiped out crops and caused detrimental conditions for good health. In Decatur, the presence of the World War I munitions plant at Muscle Shoals spawned the TVA concept.

The multi-faceted program of TVA evolved from Nebraska Senator George Norris' idea to use the federal munitions base at Muscle Shoals as the foundation of a regional development plan. Since the end of WWI, the Muscle Shoals facility had sat idle, and Norris had attempted to push through legislation in 1928 and 1930 for the government to purchase and redevelop the site. During these years Presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, respectively, vetoed the bills. However, as Roosevelt developed new programs to revitalize the nation's economy, the North Alabama site found new purpose.

TVA's programs are credited with promoting growth, development, and stability of the region. By the 1930s, it was clear that much of the nation's farmland had not been properly managed. A report from the USDA noted that 75-100% of topsoil had eroded from some 11 million acres due to flooding and agricultural use. TVA's goal was improvement of quality of life through progressive management of natural resources. The flood control afforded by TVA's series of dams along the river brought stability to the lives of thousands of families. Farmers were then able to consistently apply modern farming methods aimed at soil improvement, thus improving crops. TVA worked with the Civilian Conservation

Corps (CCC) in planting 50 million trees across the TVA region by 1939, further assisting in soil conservation. TVA's hydroelectric power plants brought electricity to 668,000 households by 1946.

River-Related Industry

With TVA's improvements to navigation on the Tennessee River, as well as the abundant and inexpensive electricity it provided, some counties of North Alabama experienced a shift from an agricultural economy to one of industry and manufacturing. By 1940, Decatur alone had forty-one industrial plants and six wholesale warehouses, manufacturing cotton textiles, fertilizer, brick, boats and steel barges.

During this period, two major industrial employers in Decatur were Ingalls Ship Building Company and the Decatur Iron and Steel Company. They manufactured a variety of barges, ferries, and tow boats that were used in the transportation of grain, coal and iron ore. Both companies contributed significantly to the armed forces during World War II. The Decatur Iron and Steel Company supplied the U.S. Army with thirty-three tow boats and thirty-three landing craft for tank transport. Eleven more of the latter went to ally Great Britain. Some of these were converted into armored landing craft for the Normandy invasion. Many other landing craft from Decatur were used as well at Normandy and throughout the Pacific. Ingalls Ship Building, located on Market Street, employed 1500 workers at this time and built over 100 barges and twenty small (176-foot) freighters during the war.

Since the 1940s, dozens of industries have located along the Tennessee River in the Muscle Shoals region. Attracted by abundant water and electricity, many chemical companies such as 3M built large factories next to the river, and industries such as steel and aerospace also employ hundreds of workers. The harnessing of the Tennessee River in the twentieth century has had a major impact on the lives of the Muscle Shoals region.

See an overview of resources related to industry and hydroelectric development beginning on [page 70](#) of this report.

E4. MUSIC

American cultural sensibilities were attuned to western European art and music from the colonial period well into the nineteenth century. Ironically, it was the musical traditions of working class and slave populations that contributed to the development of indigenous forms of American popular music, including blues, ragtime, and jazz. All of these native styles have traces to the American South, specifically, the African American experience.



W.C. Handy and the Blues

W.C. Handy, a native of Florence, Alabama, became known as "the Father of the Blues" for his role in elevating essentially a regional folk genre to national recognition. Blues music has roots in the call and response work songs of African tradition, familiar among African-American slaves. These melodic chants were distractions for laborious, monotonous work and could also be a means of communication. Blues music, though, was not formerly codified for several more decades. The idiom was passed around like an oral history. Its simple 12-bar structure lent itself to expression of individualism and improvisation. This standard form came to utilize a 3-chord pattern, with banjo or guitar riffs providing structure between the vocal phrases telling the singer's story.

William Christopher Handy was born in Florence, Alabama, in 1873, nine miles from the Muscle Shoals Canal on the Tennessee River. He was born in the log cabin built by his grandfather, William Wise

Handy, a freedman and AME minister. The home was located near Lock 7, the present site of Wilson Dam. As a child, Handy frequently visited the locks and absorbed the work songs of the laborers. Handy was also influenced from church music, sounds of nature, and classical musical training under the tutelage of Y.A. Wallace, a teacher from Fisk University in Nashville.

Handy followed the out-migration of blacks from the South during the 1890s, moving around the Midwest, teaching music, performing in minstrel shows at white society dances. By 1905, Handy had ventured to Memphis and formed his own band. Handy deftly incorporated the crude folk melodies and lyrics of the blues proto-type with traditional European music theory. Though the musical idea of the blues had long been cultivated among Southern African Americans, Handy was among the first to interpret the raw, organic folk-song form of the blues as an authentic, publishable musical style that appealed to the sensibility of western European-trained ears.



Handy in 1918 – center rear with trumpet.
Source: Wikimedia Commons (public domain)

In Memphis, Handy's band was one of three African American groups hired to pitch advertising songs for three mayoral candidates in 1909. At the time, such advertising was common, and Handy's band performed their ad for candidate E. H. Crump on Memphis street corners. Following the election, the tune "Mister Crump" was revised into "The Memphis Blues," the first blues tune published as sheet music. He followed that composition with other equally famous blues songs, such as "Beale Street Blues" and "St. Louis Blues." Still in Memphis, Handy formed a publishing company that in 1919 he moved to New York City, employing his brother and children.

The blues genre became more sophisticated in urban settings, where it could include lush jazz chords, chord substitution, or embellishment with a variety of instruments. The addition of an ensemble required charting a tune on paper, in the European tradition, furthering its accessibility to white audiences. Blues music became a sensation, and its essence permeated the compositions of the famous white composers of popular music such as Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and Jerome Kern. Further, American soldiers shared the blues music with the British and French counterparts during their World War II service.

The effect of W.C. Handy's influence on American popular music is immense. Elements of blues music became incorporated with various other styles of pop music, its influence discernible in songs of pop, rock, rhythm and blues, soul and even country-western genres. With the advent of the automobile age and hi-fi, musical artists expanded their range geographically and stylistically. Music centers such as Memphis, Nashville, and Detroit developed trademark sounds based on regional influences and preferences. The same was true in North Alabama, where the region's historical Scots-Irish and African-American populations influenced a distinct "sound" that blended the musical traditions and transcended race. Numerous recording artists, black and white, flocked to Colbert County for the

opportunity to stamp their songs with the unique sound.



W.C. Handy's home in Florence is now a historic house museum.

The Recording Industry Takes Root

FAME (Florence Alabama Music Enterprises) Publishing was established in 1959 in Florence, Alabama, by Rick Hall. Moving to Muscle Shoals in 1961, FAME established the "Muscle Shoals Sound" and launched the Tri-Cities' music industry boom of the 1960s-70s. As a newly signed artist, Aretha Franklin launched her career with two FAME-published tunes. Other artists with FAME connections include Etta James, Wilson Pickett, Clarence Carter, the Osmonds, Mac Davis, Paul Anka, Jerry Reed, John Michael Montgomery, Tim McGraw, and Reba McIntire. The in-house rhythm section, dubbed "the Swampers," ventured out on their own in 1969 to establish their own company, the Muscle Shoals Sounds Studio.



FAME recording studio has had some of the greatest musicians in the world walk through its doors. Located in Muscle Shoals, its context is an auto-oriented "strip commercial" corridor.

The unassuming stone building that housed the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio became a mecca during the late-1960s and early-1970s. As the music industry became increasingly corporate-styled, independently minded musicians flocked to the Muscle Shoals venue seeking artistic freedom. There, four local musicians, known as the Swampers, hosted such music legends as Lynyrd Skynyrd, whose iconic song "Sweet Home Alabama" makes reference to the in-house band, also known as the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section. Other famous artists to have recorded at the studio include Willie Nelson, the Rolling Stones, Bob Seger, and Paul Simon. The distinctive style of the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section was featured on countless other recordings. The building was abandoned for larger facilities and was even slated for demolition in 1999 before a musician from Chicago happened upon and purchased it for preservation, restoring its interior with original furniture and vintage recording equipment. Today, Muscle Shoals Sound Studio is both a tourist destination and a working studio.

See an overview of resources related to music beginning on [page 72](#) of this report.

