

SOME NOTES ON SPECIAL ALABAMA SOURCES

by Robert S. Davis
Wallace State College
P.O. Box 2000
Hanceville, AL 35077-2000

For a listing of Alabama genealogical sources see Marcia Smith Collier, *Alabama County Data and Resources* (revised ed., 1998); Marilyn Davis Barefield, *Researching in Alabama: a Genealogical Guide* (revised edition, 1998); Ralph N. Brannen, *Alabama Bibliography: Books, Articles, Theses, Dissertations* (1996), and Robert David Ward and William Warren Rogers, *Bibliography of the County Histories of Alabama* (1991). For research in general see Robert S. Davis, *Tracing Your Alabama Past* (2003). Excellent resources for specific information on Alabama include the web site of the Alabama Department of Archives and History and also the site for the New Encyclopedia of Alabama:

<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Home.jsp>

Among the several sources for places and boundaries of Alabama there is W. Craig Remington and Thomas J. Kallsen, *Historical Atlas of Alabama Volume I Historical Locations by County* (1997) and *Volume II Cemeteries* (2000); Peggy Tuck Sinko, *Alabama: Atlas of Historical County Boundaries* (1996); William A. Read, *Indian Place Names in Alabama* (1984); volume four of *Omni Gazetteer of the United States of America* (1990); Virginia O. Foscue, *Place Names in Alabama* (1989); and *A List of Nineteenth Century Maps of the State of Alabama* (1973). Modern Alabama highway maps are divided into the townships, ranges, and sections used in federal land grants and modern Alabama county road maps. The road maps can be ordered from Map Sales, Alabama Department of Transportation, 1409 Coliseum Blvd. RM. R-109, Montgomery, AL 36130-3050. We have a complete set of these maps. The University of Alabama's Department of Cartography has a huge collection of Alabama maps from the distant past to the present on the Internet: <http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/index.html> For many other useful Internet sites for accessing maps, see our handout on maps.

For Prehistoric and Native American Alabama, among other works see John A. Walthall, *Prehistoric Indians of the Southeast: Archaeology of Alabama and the Middle South* (1990); Amos J. Wright, *Historic Indian Towns in Alabama* (2003); David L. DeJarnette, *Handbook of Alabama Archaeology* (1990); Billie Ford Snider, *Full Name Indexes: Creek Indians East of the Mississippi* (1993); John Franklin Phillips, *The American Indian in Alabama and the Southeast* (1986); and Marie West Cromer, *Modern Indians of Alabama* (1984).

Historical Alabama began in 1699 with the city of Mobile, one of America's oldest cities. Mobile has been ruled by France, Great Britain, Spain, the Confederacy, and the United States. Our vertical file on Mobile has a brochure on their various local archives and we have early Mobile records, 1715-1901, transcribed by the Works Projects Administration. The records are on microfilm and the indexes are as books. For French, Spanish, and English records of what became Alabama see Henry Putney Beers, *French and Spanish Records of Louisiana: a Bibliographical Guide to Archive and Manuscript Sources* (1989); Alice D. Forsyth, *Louisiana Marriage Contracts. . . 1725-1758* (1980); Lawrence H. Feldman, *Anglo-Americans in Spanish Archives* (1991); Stanley Clisby Arthur, *Index to the Dispatches of the Spanish Governors of*

Louisiana 1766-1792 (1975); *Index to the Archives of Spanish West Florida 1782-1810* (1975); and Winston De Ville, *English Land Grants in West Florida 1766-1776* (1986). We also have in book form the index to the records of Mobile's Roman Catholic church: Jerome Lepre, *Index to the Records of Old Mobile's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception* (1992).

Alabama became a territory in 1817 (previously it was part of the Mississippi Territory) and a state in 1819. We have Jean Strickland's books of abstracts of records of the Mississippi Territory. Several other sources are also useful in documenting early American arrivals in Alabama including Dorothy Williams Potter, *Passports of Southeastern Pioneers 1770-1823* (1982); *The Territorial Papers of the United States* series; James Edmonds Saunders, *Early Settlers of Alabama* (1899); and the indexes to tax records and state census records of early Alabama (Mississippi Territory before 1817) by Accelerated Indexing Systems for 1810, 1811-1819, 1820-1829, 1831-1839, and 1855.

A great deal of material on early Alabama appears in the *American State Papers*. Those volumes can be searched and copied from electronically through the American Memory part of the Library of Congress web site. Wallace State has on microfilm letters from the U. S. Attorney General about land claims and other matters before the federal courts, 1822-1888.

Except for the state census of 1866, none of the surviving state census records includes all Alabama counties of their respective periods. Alabama does not have surviving Federal census records prior to 1830 although state census returns for 1820 survive and have been published for Baldwin, Conecuh, Dallas, Franklin, Limestone, St. Clair, Shelby, and Wilcox counties. The 1855 state census survives for Autauga, Baldwin, Blount, Coffee, Franklin, Henry, Lowndes, Macon, Mobile, Montgomery, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, Tallapoosa, Tuscaloosa, and Wilcox counties. It has a book index. Census indexes have been published for the Alabama Federal census returns, 1830-1870, and exist as soundexes for the 1880 and 1900-1920 Federal censuses. Only a few fragments of the returns for Perry County survive of the 1890 census.

Alabama is a federal land state and has records of land grants at the National Archives and the Bureau of Land Management (**see our handouts on federal land records.**) The land grants to individuals under the previous governments were recognized by the United States and with records of early federal grants are abstracted in the volumes of *The American State Papers*. The free American Memory part of the Library of Congress web site and the subscription site Genealogybank.com each includes the *American State Papers*. The best lists for later land grants are the individual county tract books which, with other related plat books and fields notes, have been copied onto the free web site of the Alabama Secretary of State.

Alabama had many types of land grants including simple purchases of land from the government through local federal land offices. Military warrants, given for military service in the United States prior to 1858, have genealogically valuable petitions for land that can be ordered from Military Records, National Archives, 700 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001. Federal lands in Alabama for veterans and heirs of veterans begin in 1842. Homestead land grants, grants of land made to occupants of Federal lands following the Homestead Act of 1862 are particularly good sources of personal and even naturalization information. For a very detailed account of Federal land grants in Alabama see the introduction to Wyley Donald Ward, *Original*

Land Sales and Grants in Covington County, Alabama a copy of which is in our "Land Records-Federal" vertical file.

For statewide sources of biographical and family information on Alabama there is the microfilm of the Alabama family folders of the Alabama Department of Archives and History; the funeral and anniversary notices from Alabama newspapers, 1950-1979; a special index to select counties in the 1870 census of Alabama;¹ and the Alabama military records card catalog indexes for wars from the American Revolution to World War I. We have volumes of Alabama military records compiled by Pauline Gandrud and Kathleen Jones from Alabama county records.

For all sorts of records from across Alabama, we have the other books Gandrud and Jones; the four volumes by Flora D. England, *Alabama Notes*; and, for North Alabama, the five volumes by Carl Elliott, *Annals of Northwest Alabama*. The correspondence of Alabama researcher Pauline Gandrud has been digitized on the website of the Hoole Library of the University of Alabama's Acumen: <http://acumen.lib.ua.edu/u0003/0000581>

We and the Birmingham Public Library have an unpublished alphabetical list of biographical sketches of Alabamians known as Alabama Biographical Sketches. It has also been copied, along with a number of other valuable databases on the free web site of the Birmingham Public Library. In our file "Alabama Doctors," we have an alphabetical list of the medical examinations files, 1881-1962, at the Alabama Department of Archives and History. Special Collections, Hoole Library, University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, has the genealogical correspondence of Alabama researchers Pauline Gandrud and Kathleen Paul Jones. Their notes from Alabama county records have been published as a series of books.

The major county records for all but Mobile, Morgan, and Houston counties have been microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah. This microfilm is available at the Alabama Department of Archives and History and can also be borrowed by us from Utah (see the catalog on microfiche.) Many central and north Alabama counties have special county archives separate from the county offices. The Madison County Archives, for example, is part of the Huntsville Public Library. County records began in what is today Alabama as early as 1799, including originally both marriage bonds and licenses. In 1850, Alabama's "Orphans Court" was renamed the Probate Court. It always had jurisdiction for all estate, marriage, deeds, and other property entitlement records. An incomplete, statewide, index to early Alabama wills is Alabama Society Daughters of the American Revolution, *Index to Alabama Wills 1808-1870* (1955). Alabama's county marriage records are a particularly rich source of information as, into this century, the state required not only a license but also a bond until 1888. Starting in 1910, personal information on the bride and groom (but not names of parents) frequently appears on Alabama marriage records.

Sometimes not microfilmed, however, are the early birth and death records of Alabama, beginning in the 1881 and ending in 1908, found in the records of the judges of probate for Alabama's counties. Birth and death records from 1909 to the present must be sought from Alabama's state vital records office (see our handout). Alabama death certificates for 1908-1974 have a free index on Familysearch.org (along with many other valuable research tools) and can be borrowed on microfilm through LDS Family History Centers, as can an index to Alabama births, 1917-1919. (We also have them on microfilm.) On microfilm we have an index to

Alabama death certificates, 1908-1959; divorces, 1950-1959; and marriages, 1936-1969. Copies of birth certificates (although restricted to only the person on the birth certificate) and death certificates can be obtained, while you wait, by FAX at any of Alabama's county health departments or by writing to the Office of Vital Records, Department of Health, P.O. Box 5625, Montgomery, AL 36103-5625. Either way, the cost of a search and copy is currently twelve dollars. We have an index to Alabama birth certificates, 1917-1919, on microfilm.

Many genealogically valuable records are the result of the Civil War in Alabama (see our handouts on Civil War records). The thousands of North Alabamians in the Federal army have service and often pension records in Military Records, National Archives, Washington, DC 20408. On microfilm we have the service records for the First Alabama Cavalry, United States Army, and their separate medical histories, as well as a nationwide index to Federal pensions. Also see our vertical file on Alabama Union soldiers. We have the federal direct tax records for Alabama, 1865-1866, including the real estate property evaluations made for Barbour, Calhoun, Chambers, DeKalb, Henry, Randolph, Russell, and St. Clair counties. At the end of the latter microfilm there is a list that appears to be of federal veterans living in those counties. We have on order the approved claims for loss of property to the federal military (Southern Claims Commission) during the Civil War and many similar records. See our handout on federal Civil War claims.

In addition to the many National Archives microfilms of Alabama Confederate records, we have on microfilm from the Alabama Department of Archives and History a special index to Alabama Confederate service records; the Confederate pensions to resident veterans and widows; the 1866 state census (giving number of men in each family killed, wounded, or missing in the war); and the 1867 voter lists. The latter are a rich source of naturalization information for men in several counties (see our handout on the voter lists) and is being copied onto the free web site of the Alabama Department of Archives and History. We have the 1907 census of Confederate veterans in Alabama in book form and microfilm by county, with a statewide index, and the censuses of Confederate pensioners for 1921 and 1927 on microfilm. The 1907 and 1921 censuses are rich sources of personal information. National Archives microfilm M816 and M817 include records of the Freedman's bank branches in Alabama, a valuable source for African American research. We have the LDS CD-ROM disks of genealogical data from all of the surviving register books of the bank.

The Alabama Department of Archives and History, 624 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36130 is the oldest state department of archives in the United States. Its extensive collections of private papers and complete collections of official papers of governors are being cataloged on computer on the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN). The Alabama Archives has an excellent web site on the Internet that includes a list of its extensive newspaper microfilm collection. The archives loans out this film through local library interlibrary loan. Its web site also contains a great deal of other useful sources including addresses, bibliographies, and much more. **All libraries can borrow Alabama newspaper microfilm from the Alabama Archives.**

Several county libraries have excellent locally oriented genealogical collections but the Huntsville and Birmingham public libraries have broad holdings. The Birmingham Public Library, 2020 Park Place, Birmingham, AL 35203 has the largest genealogical collection for the South, in the southeastern United States. The Harwell G. Davis Library, Samford University

Library, 800 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, AL 35229 has a good genealogical collection and also the archives of the Alabama Baptist Convention. They microfilm Alabama church records of all denominations loaned to them by individual churches. See our handout on Alabama area genealogical collections.

SOME ADDITIONS TO *TRACING YOUR ALABAMA PAST*

The Department of Geography of the University of Alabama has placed on the Internet almost all available Alabama maps from the University of Alabama, the Birmingham Public Library, and the Alabama Department of Archives and History:

<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/index.html>

For more maps on the Internet see the handout at Wallace State on maps and:

The Air University: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/aul/lane.htm>

The Perry-Castaneda Map Collection of the University of Texas: the Air University: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/aul/lane.htm>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has added to its free website Familysearch.org an index to deceased persons and parents of deceased persons found in Alabama death certificates, 1908-1974:

<http://pilot.familysearch.org/recordsearch/start.html#start>

The WPA index to Alabama Biographical Sketches has been placed on the website of the Birmingham Public Library and will be updated to include sketches published since the 1930s or missed by the WPA. It and many other valuable databases can be accessed at:

http://www.bplonline.org/virtual/onlinedatabases/db_list.aspx?id=11

Alabama Confederate families were denied federal Homestead land grants from 1862 to 1875.

Population schedules for federal census records for Alabama and all other states have been indexed and digitized onto the subscription site Ancestry.com.

Alabama newspapers are included on many the giant newspaper databases that individuals and/or libraries can subscribe including Newspaperarchive.com, Genealogybank, and 19th Century Newspapers. The genealogy program at Wallace State has a handout on newspaper websites; also see international bibliography of digitized newspaper sites: the International Coalition on Newspapers:

<http://icon.crl.edu/digitization.htm>

For historic Alabama photographs and other items see Alabama Mosaic

<http://www.alabamamosaic.org/>

NOTES

¹ The index is to a state copy of the 1870 federal census of Alabama and covers the counties of Autauga, Baker, Baldwin, Barbour, Bibb, Blount, Bullock, Calhoun, Chambers, Chilton, Clarke, Colbert, Conecuh, Coosa, Crenshaw, Dale, Dallas, DeKalb, Elmore, Escambia, Etowah, Geneva, Green, Hale, Henry, Houston, Jackson, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Lowndes, and Macon counties. We also have the Alabama Department of Archives and History's microfilm of the state copy of the 1850 Federal census and the state censuses of 1855 and 1866.