

# OLD CAHAWBA'S STORY

In 1819, Cahawba, Alabama's first state capital, was carved out of the wilderness. Ironically, it was built upon the remains of an earlier ghost town, a 16th century Mississippian Indian village. Alabama's governor incorporated these ancient earthworks into the centerpiece of the capital city.

Alabama's capital was moved to Tuscaloosa in 1826, but Cahawba survived as a county seat, and grew into a very wealthy antebellum river town - a place dependant on cotton and slavery. During the Civil War, thousands of Union soldiers were held captive at Cahawba. After the war, Cahawba briefly became a refuge for newly emancipated slaves, but then suddenly and mysteriously this historic town was abandoned.

Today, Cahawba is an important archaeological site and an authentic ghost town with picturesque ruins and rare natural features.

Don't be surprised if you imagine ghostly shapes wandering among the moss-covered ruins. Former resident Anna Gayle Fry predicted that "Cahawba, like the ghost of the past, would never be still."

So take some time out of your busy schedule to roam Cahawba's abandoned streets. View the crumbling ruins and contemplate the mysterious disappearance of Alabama's first capital and the transient nature of human endeavor. You might leave with a new perspective on your own life.

# Old Cahawba

THE PARK VISITOR CENTER IS OPEN  
12 PM TO 5 PM THURS-SUN

THE GROUNDS ARE OPEN  
9 AM TO 5 PM DAILY

Group Tours are available during  
morning hours,  
by advance reservation only.

For more information,  
see the staff in the visitor center,  
or call (334) 872-8058.

[www.ahc.alabama.gov](http://www.ahc.alabama.gov)  
[www.cahawba.org](http://www.cahawba.org)



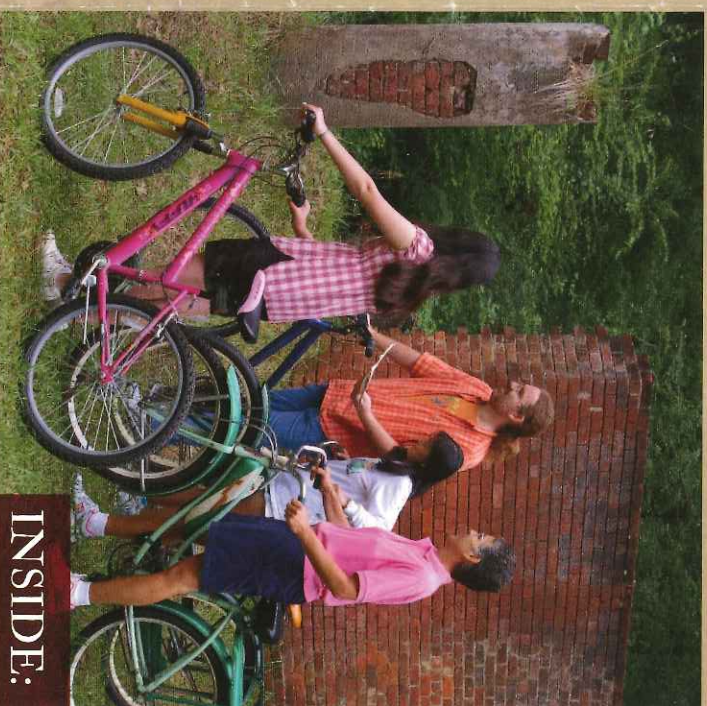
[www.facebook.com/oldcahawba](http://www.facebook.com/oldcahawba)



Old Cahawba Archaeological  
Park is a property of the  
Alabama Historical  
Commission, State of Alabama.

EXPLORER'S GUIDE  
TO

# Old Cahawba



Walking or riding a bike  
is healthy exercise and  
the best way to explore  
Cahawba's relic landscape.

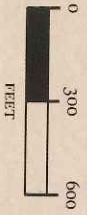
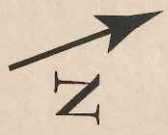
## INSIDE:

- Trail map
- Clues to guide your day of discovery

**FREE BIKES!**

Regions Bank and a grant through the Alabama Department of Public Health has made a limited number of bicycles available for use in the park, on a first come, first served basis.

# Old Cahawba



ROADS OPEN FOR TRAVEL

Canoe Launch

FIRST SOUTH STREET

CAPITOL STREET

FIRST NORTH STREET

CRAIG STREET

BEECH STREET

ASH STREET

CHESTNUT STREET

PINE STREET

OAK STREET

RURAL GROUND

CAHABA RIVER

ALABAMA RIVER

CAPITOL RESERVE

Picnic Area and Restrooms

Canoe Takeout

Gates Locked at 5pm

Gates Locked at 5pm

20

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17

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14

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3



FOREVER WILD LAND TRUST

TO ORVILLE HIGHWAY 22 AND SELMA

FIFTH SOUTH STREET

SIXTH SOUTH STREET

SEVENTH SOUTH STREET

EIGHTH SOUTH STREET

NINTH SOUTH STREET

OAK STREET

MULBER

WALNUT

VINE

ALABAMA

**1** **ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH** - Built in Cahawba 1854; moved away 1887; returned 2006 but placed on higher ground to avoid flooding. Notice the vertical "board and batten" siding, typical of Gothic Revival style.

**2** **ARTESIAN WELL** - Hidden behind the relocated church, this well, like most of Cahawba's artesian wells, flowed continuously since the 1850s, then suddenly and mysteriously went dry in the 1990s.

**3** **SITE OF "CASTLE MORGAN"** - A cotton warehouse converted into a prison for captured federal soldiers during the Civil War. Walk the perimeter of the 200 x 125 foot prison by noticing changes in the ground elevation caused by discarded brick rubble from the prison walls.

**4** **SITE OF INDIAN VILLAGE** - Remnant of a moat that once surrounded a fortified 16th century Native American village.



TOWNSEND, NPS

**5** **GRAVE OF MARY ELIZA PERINE** - Mary Eliza died in childbirth in 1838, and was buried behind her home.

**6** **RAILROAD EMBANKMENT** - This earthen embankment was part of a failed attempt in the 1830s to build a railroad.

**7** **VINE STREET** - Cahawba's main street, once filled with stores, offices, and hotels. Look for grassy mounds covering collapsed brick walls, depressions that were basements, and a broken pipe in the road that was an artesian well.



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**8** **CROCHERON COLUMNS** 1843 - Ruins of the R. C. Crocheron home that overlooked the two rivers and was attached to an older 80 ft. long brick store (1821). Look for brick columns as well as the basement that was once beneath the store. Destroyed by fire circa 1920.

**9** **BARKER'S SLAVE QUARTERS** - Built 1860. Note the columns and rear wing that were added after the main house burned in 1935.

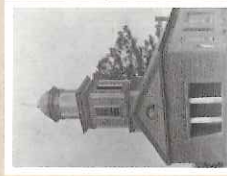
**10** **OLD PECAN ORCHARDS** - After Cahawba was abandoned, the Kirkpatrick family planted groves of pecan trees and raised hybrid hogs, forsaking cotton and the one crop system.



**11** **CAHAWBA BURIAL GROUND, PARKING** - The town's graveyard for slaves. Note the thorny trifoliolate orange shrub (*Poinsettia trifoliata*) near the footbridge. A native of China, this was used as an impenetrable hedge, but also in graveyards perhaps as a reminder of Jesus's crown of thorns. SELF-GUIDING BROCHURE AVAILABLE

**12** **FAMBRG/ARTHUR HOME** - The oldest original structure in the park sits on a finished basement, not a tall foundation. Home to both a judge and a former slave, possibly assembled out of two older homes in 1841.

**13** **ONE-ROOM SCHOOL** - In 1950, this structure was one of 95 similar segregated schools in Dallas county used by African American children.



**14** **METHODIST CHURCH RUINS** - Greek revival style. First single denomination church built in town; last church occupied. Destroyed by fire in 1954.

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**15** **"NEW" CEMETERY 1851** - A quiet place to slow down and listen to bird songs. If you believe local folklore, you might also hear ghostly voices or the cry of the mythical Wampus Kat. SELF-GUIDING BROCHURE AVAILABLE

**16** **PERINE MANSION WELL** ca. 1857 - E. M. Perine routed the cool water from this artesian well through pipes in the walls of his mansion to create an early form of air-conditioning. Dip your fingers in the flowing water. You will find it a constant temperature, cool in the summer, but warm in the winter.



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**17** **FACE WELL 1852** - Look closely, it sports a face and a year of manufacture. During the 1860s, a mystic cedar maze was located nearby and was reportedly haunted by a ghostly ball of light.

**18** **OLD CAPITAL ERA CEMETERY** - Look for brick walls that enclosed family plots and the gravestone with the weeping willow icon, once a popular symbol of mourning and sorrow. Evergreen shrubs planted near graves symbolized a belief in everlasting life.

**19** **CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL STONES** - These markers list the names, ranks, and regiments of Union soldiers who died at the Cahaba Federal Prison. Their bodies were disinterred shortly after the War and are now at rest in the Marietta National Cemetery in Georgia.

**20** **NATURE TRAIL** - This paved walkway takes you through a uniquely southern habitat, on a 1/2 mile loop that includes a scenic overlook on Clear Creek. Also, a spur trail leads to an accessible canoe launch for the Cahaba River. SELF-GUIDING BROCHURE AVAILABLE



# Read the Landscape Like a Book

Explorers, as you bike or hike, keep your eyes open for ruins that are scattered throughout the park. Columns, chimneys, sunken basements, traces of old roadbeds, artesian wells, earthen embankments, tombstones and ditches are all clues to Cahawba's past. The trail map inside this brochure will guide you to many of these, but there are other clues embedded in the landscape throughout the park that you might find. For example:

## “Penciling”

This was a common practice used by brick masons in the early 19th century to protect and enhance the appearance of their work. They would paint a thick white line over their mortar joints to make handmade bricks look more uniform. This is a clue that machine made bricks were not available.

Some of Cahawba's “penciling” has vanished due to inappropriate repairs over the years. The rest is weathered, but if you are a persistent explorer, you will find some authentic “penciling” among the ruins.

## Living Artifacts

It may look like nature has reclaimed this historic place, but instead you are surrounded by living artifacts that were brought here by early settlers. A plant identification guide in your bicycle basket, backpack or smart phone could help you find the many plants at Cahawba that originated in far away places, like roses, daffodils, crepe myrtles, wisteria and privet. Here are just two examples to get you started:

### Chinaberry Trees

An early town ordinance required all residents to plant shade trees between the brick sidewalks and the streets. Most chose to plant fast growing chinaberry trees (*Melia azadirach*) which were imported from Asia.



### Osage Orange

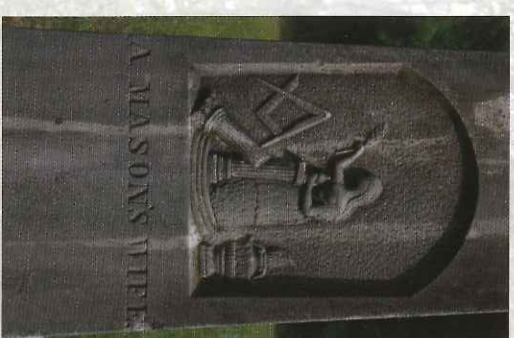
To keep animals out of the town graveyard and elsewhere, Osage oranges (*Machora pomifera*) were brought from Texas and planted in large numbers to create living hedge fences. Today only a few of these hedges are still with us, and they have grown into trees. Look for their grapefruit-sized fleshy fruit in the late summer and fall. Local lore maintains that this fruit repels cockroaches and silverfish.



## Cemetery Inscriptions

Here are actual messages from Cahawba's historic residents intentionally left behind for you! They will tell you if the departed was a “beloved wife,” a war hero, a good Christian, or if she just “done what she could.”

Search for gravestones with the names of Cahawba's stone carvers inscribed on them. These signatures are most often found at the bottom right corner of the stone marker.



# Old Cahawba

Old Cahawba is an Archaeological Preserve

Exploring is Encouraged.

Metal Detecting and  
Digging are Forbidden.

If you discover an artifact during your explorations, please leave it where you found it. In archaeology, like crime scene investigation, it is the context of an item that reveals the true story. Thoughtlessly removing an artifact destroys evidence.

The best thing you can do is to note the artifact's location (make a sketch map if you can) and take a picture if you have a camera. Then report your find to park staff.

