

# History

Franklin County is rich in history with a number of interesting tales to be told. The county was established February 4, 1814 by the Alabama Territorial Legislature, preceded only by Madison (1808), Mobile (1812) and Clark (1812) counties, which had been organized from Mississippi territory.

Illustrious American patriot Benjamin Franklin had been dead less than 30 years, when a large tract of land in Northwest Alabama was dubbed Franklin County in his honor.

The county originally extended north to the Tennessee River, but a parcel was later divided off and became Colbert County. It is a land that once was called home by several Indian Tribes, most notably the Chickasaws, Creeks, and Cherokees.

During its first 100 years, Franklin County played host to a number of battles as to which community would hold the honor of county seat. In an election in 1820, Russellville had been named county seat by out polling Big Springs, now known as Tuscumbia. But in 1849, the larger Tuscumbia started clamoring for change. Another election was held between Russellville, Tuscumbia, and "Center", which was not a city but was the geographic center of the county. Center was victorious and a town called Frankfort was platted and named county seat.

About 30 years later, Colbert County was formed and another election was held and this time Belgreen beat out Frankfort. Belgreen remained the county seat until a "mysterious" fire broke out at the courthouse the night of December 1, 1890, burning the building to the ground. Another election took place for the replacement seat to be named and a heated battle broke out between Russellville and Isbell. Writers characterized the election by penning that "many things were said and written which should not have been." Many prominent residents of Russellville were accused of actually living in "Rascalville". Russellville

finally won out and has remained the county seat ever since.

Franklin County Courthouse in Russellville.



# ALABAMA'S Adventurous Side

## FRANKLIN COUNTY

RUSSELLVILLE • RED BAY • PHIL CAMPBELL • SPRUCE PINE • HODGES • VINA

Bear Creek Lakes • Bear Creek Floatway • Dismals Canyon  
Rock Bridge Canyon Equestrian Park • Red Bay Museum  
Red Bay Family Fun Park • Cypress Cove Farm Bird Trail  
Lee Sports Complex • King's Drive-In • Historic Roxy Theatre



Russellville GPS: 34.5078586, -87.7286651

Birmingham, AL 86 miles  
Nashville, TN 127 miles  
Memphis, TN 139 miles  
Florence, AL 22 miles

Corinth, MS 69 miles  
Tupelo, MS 74 miles  
Jasper, AL 60 miles  
Huntsville, AL 72 miles



**Franklin County Chamber of Commerce**  
P. O. Box 44, Russellville, AL 35653

**256-332-1760**

**FranklinCountyChamber.org**

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**256-332-1760**

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# Festivals



## The Phil Campbell Hoedown

When: 3rd Weekend in June

Admission: Free

Phone: 205-993-5313

Web: [www.philcampbellal.com/hoedown](http://www.philcampbellal.com/hoedown)

Every summer Phil Campbell hosts an annual celebration, The Downtown Hoedown (formerly Phil Campbell Day). During this celebration there are rides and games for kids, car shows, and art & crafts. Local bands and singers perform during the evening.

## Jam on Sloss Lake

When: 4th of July

Admission: Free

Phone: 256-332-6060

Web: [www.franklincounty-chamber.org](http://www.franklincounty-chamber.org)

Sloss Lake in Russellville hosts this annual event of food and entertainment to celebrate our nation's birthday. This special event ends with a spectacular fireworks show!

## Vina July Fest

When: Last Saturday in July

Phone: 256-356-4996

Web: [www.vinaalabama.org](http://www.vinaalabama.org)

Admission: Free

The Town of Vina hosts July Fest every year on the last Saturday of the month. The family-friendly event includes music along with a variety of vendors including great food, and arts & crafts. A number of traditional family summer contests are held like the "Draw Down." The Draw Down awards the ultimate cash prize of \$17,000. The event concludes with a fireworks display.



## Franklin County Watermelon Festival

Franklin County is the official "Watermelon Capital of Alabama"

When: 3rd Weekend in August

Phone: 256-332-1760

Info: [www.franklincounty-chamber.org](http://www.franklincounty-chamber.org)

Admission: Free

Downtown Russellville is home of the Franklin County Watermelon Festival. It's a time for a lot of good fun and of course, juicy watermelons that can cool a hot summer day in the South. It began in 1981 and has become a must-do event for thousands. This spectacular family event offers two days of non-stop music, contests and entertainment, as well as, a pageant (held in July), arts & crafts, 5k run, antique car & truck show, tasty festival foods, tractor show, bike ride and lots of free watermelon. Watermelon contests include the largest melon, seed spitting, best tasting melon, best dressed melon, and the most unusual melon.

## Red Bay Founder's Fest

When: 3rd Saturday in September

Phone: 256-356-4473, ext. 3

Web: [www.redbay-al.gov](http://www.redbay-al.gov)

Admission: Free

Red Bay celebrates its history during the Founder's Fest in September. The event is popular among those who crave a family type atmosphere and a lot of fun. Among the festivities are storytelling, music, arts and crafts, food, games, and car and tractor shows. The Red Bay Museum is open and merchants will offer sidewalk sales. A fried pie contest with cash prizes is also featured. There is special entertainment throughout the day, t-shirt, door prizes and more. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.



Miss Watermelon Queen awards winning certificates to largest watermelon contestants.



## Spirit of Hodges Festival

When: 2nd Weekend in October

Phone: 205-935-3445

Web: [www.franklincounty-chamber.org](http://www.franklincounty-chamber.org)

Admission: Free

The name "The Spirit of Hodges Festival" takes on special meaning and reflects the town's history. The Spirit of Hodges was a P-51 Mustang fighter aircraft used in World War II. The plane was named for the town after an auction in which residents of Hodges raised more than \$47,000 in war bonds in 1943. The annual event includes an all day line-up of bands, pony rides, fish fry and chicken supper, crafts, miniature train rides, and vendors of all kinds.

## Spruce Pine Day

When: 3rd Saturday in October

Phone: 256-332-1760

Web: [www.franklincounty-chamber.org](http://www.franklincounty-chamber.org)

Admission: Free

Spruce Pine Day began in 1999 when the local grocer and post master made chicken stew and invited the community. The tradition of togetherness continues with fun for kids along with music and vendors. While there, visit the Spruce Pine Museum for a history lesson.

## Tri-State Kudzu Klassic

When: October

Phone: 256-331-2115

Web: [www.kudzuklassic.com](http://www.kudzuklassic.com)

Admission: Small admission fee

The Tri-State Kudzu Klassic "Festival of Bands" features high quality and competitive marching bands from Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee in a day-long competition for superior ratings. Hosted at Russellville High School, the Klassic is known as one of the most challenging competitions each year. Award categories include "Best in Class" to the band, drum major, majorette, dance line, color guard, and percussion units, and the "Curtis Ikard Challenge Cup" for the Grand Champion winner. It also features a special exhibition performance by the Russellville High School Marching Hundred Band.



Spruce Pine Museum

# Attractions



## Bear Creek Lakes

256-332-4392, 877-FOR-BCDA

[www.BearCreekLakes.com](http://www.BearCreekLakes.com)

### Camping/Cabins

Bear Creek offers over 160 campsites in 5 campgrounds on more than 15,000 acres of land maintained by the Bear Creek Development Authority (BCDA). For more information, see the Accommodations section.

### Fishing

Fishing in one of the BCDA's many lakes is ranked among the top in the country. Occupying over 8,000 acres, the clean waters provide anglers with abundant small and largemouth bass as well as crappie and channel catfish.

### Boating and Swimming

Swimming in one of Bear Creek Lakes is popular because of the clean water and sand beaches. Also, the warm climate offers an extended swimming season.

## Bear Creek Floatway

256-332-4392, 877-FOR-BCDA

[www.BearCreekLakes.com](http://www.BearCreekLakes.com)

Rated as one of the best floatways in Alabama. Releases from Upper Bear Reservoir are made to provide adequate flow



on all weekends and holidays, Memorial Day through Labor Day. Releases shut off at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. If traveling long distances, please call ahead to check current conditions. The

Floatway is considered a Class I course with exceptions.

Take special note: Upper Factory Falls and Lower Factory Falls are Class VI and are dangerous. Please note, access is allowed at designated points only.

## Bay Tree Council for the

### Performing Arts

256-356-9286; [www.baytreecouncil.com](http://www.baytreecouncil.com)

The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts began with its first play in 1996. The BTCPA hosts plays in the theatre of Community Spirit Bank's Weatherford Centre. The plays

bring citizens of the community to the stage and audiences from surrounding cities and states.

The BTCPA has involved more than 200 volunteers in



The Bay Tree Council Players

play performances while being enjoyed by thousands. The BTCPA has produced more than 50 family-friendly plays, each February, April and November. The BTCPA and theatre welcomes small and large groups with dinner and play packages available.

## Accommodations

### Best Western Plus Russellville Hotel & Suites

13770 Hwy 43, Russellville, AL 35653

(866) 269-0325, (256) 332-1002

60 rooms, fitness center, kitchenettes, pool, hot tub, free Continental breakfast, high speed internet.

### Greenwoods Inn, Inc.

13600 Hwy 43 Bypass, Russellville, AL 35653

(256) 332-8920, (800) 233-0841

64 rooms, pool, hot tub, pets allowed, free Continental breakfast, high speed internet.

### America's Best Value Inn & Suites

14184 Hwy 43, Russellville, AL 35653

256-332-3749

30 rooms, free wifi, free continental breakfast, microwave, mini frig, pets allowed.



## Cypress Cove Farms & North Alabama Birding Trail

1895 Hwy 28, Red Bay, AL 35582  
(256) 332-1760

Identified as Site #51, Northwest Loop of the North Alabama Birding Trail, the farm features two wooded birding observation areas as well as three ponds and several

miles of nature trails divided into 10 paths. Along with the bird observation sites and bird sanctuary, existing farm structures at Cypress Cove Farm have been modified for use as bird blinds and education facilities. The farm includes a working gristmill, antique tractors and blacksmithing demonstrations for groups. Open daily 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Groups should call ahead to make arrangements.



## Dismals Canyon

205-993-4559

[www.DismalsCanyon.com](http://www.DismalsCanyon.com)

Dismals Canyon - located in Northwest Alabama - is an 85 acre Natural Conservatory privately owned and operated. It is not a State Park or National Park. However, it was designated a "National Natural Landmark" in 1975 by the National Natural Landmarks Program. NNLs are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Through the heart of the canyon flows "Dismals Branch", a winding stream that enters the canyon with a roar through "Rainbow Falls". A 1.5 mile hiking trail on the canyon floor follows the stream through skyreaching boulders, past thundering waterfalls, into a secret world of mossy-green and pearl gray filled with ferns and giant trees.

Along with hiking the canyon floor, and swimming - Romantic Cabins can be rented, Secluded Campsites are available, and a Country Store offers supplies and Indian wares.

Guided night tours allow visitors to view the glow-in-the-dark creatures known locally as Dismalites.

## Historic Roxy Theatre

[www.historicroxytheatre.com](http://www.historicroxytheatre.com)

The historic Roxy Theatre has been a beloved fixture of downtown Russellville since 1949. It first served as a movie theatre and today as a venue for concerts, recitals, and talent shows. It is located inside the new Americana Music Triangle, which marks the roots of nine music genres. The Roxy is 16 miles south of Muscle Shoals, the home of Fame Recording Studio, and 58 miles northeast of Tupelo, Mississippi, the birthplace of Elvis Presley. Come hear the sounds of country, folk, gospel, the blues, and rock and roll by professional and local performers. The Roxy Theatre is maintained and operated by the Franklin County Arts & Humanities Council. Please check the website for upcoming shows and events.



## CABINS & CAMPGROUNDS

### Bear Creek Development Authority

1111 Co. Rd. 88, Hodges, AL 35571

(256) 332-4392; (256) 912-0592,

877-FOR-BCDA, [BearCreekLakes.com](http://BearCreekLakes.com)

Cabins: Available in one or two bedrooms, each cabin also includes a sofa, increasing the number of guests per cabin.

Campgrounds: 30 amp, 50 amp, dumpstation, rigs over 35 feet allowed, RV, tent, primitive, campfire area, cooking grills, swimming area, boat launch, showers, fishing, guide service, store, picnic area.



### Dismals Canyon

901 Hwy 8, Phil Campbell, AL 35581

(205) 993-4559, [DismalsCanyon.com](http://DismalsCanyon.com)

Cabins: Two furnished, two bedroom Western Red Cedar cabins with vaulted ceilings and stone fireplaces.

Campgrounds: Tent, primitive, pool, swimming area, showers, cabins, fishing, store, hiking trails, picnic area.



## King's Drive-In

18478 Hwy 43, Russellville, AL 35653, 256-332-3619

The King Drive-In began showing films in 1949 when it was originally owned by namesake A.L. King. King's son, Morgan, took over operations in 1974. The King Drive-In remains among the last currently operating drive-in theaters in North Alabama. It has survived for more than 60 years in Franklin County and has upgraded its facilities to include the transmission of sound through FM radio, as well as an upgraded screen and projector. Currently, the King Drive-In plays double and sometimes triple features on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

## Red Bay Family Fun Park

256-356-4473, ext. 3; [www.redbay-al.gov](http://www.redbay-al.gov)

Red Bay family fun-park, featuring Red Bay Water Park, includes pavilion, picnic areas, basketball court, and playground area. Water Park opens mid-May and closes in mid-August and includes two adult water slides, four children's water slides, large swimming pool and a concession stand. Park hours: daily 1-5 p.m. Season pass and private parties available.



## Red Bay Museum

[www.redbay-al.gov](http://www.redbay-al.gov)

The first exhibit to greet visitors is a re-creation of the Red Bay Hotel lobby, complete with original counter, neon sign, room door with transom and staircase. The next two exhibits are examples of general merchandise or dry goods stores. Directly across the aisle you will discover an original soda fountain from an early drug store. The Bay Theater is depicted next, showcasing the original ticket window glass and a player piano used for silent movies. A large portion of the top floor is dedicated to country music star Tammy Wynette, originally from Tremont, MS where she was born and went to school. She called Red Bay her hometown since she shopped, visited relatives and went to the movie theater here. Open Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1:30-4:00 p.m. and by appointment. Small admission fee.



## Rock Bridge Canyon

### Equestrian Park

331 Trail Head Road, Hodges, AL 35571

205-935-3499; [www.rockbridgecanyon.com](http://www.rockbridgecanyon.com)

Rock Bridge Canyon Equestrian Park is a horse trail with miles of picturesque trails winding through acres of woodlands and canyons with points of interest and overlooks. Trails for the adventurous riders as well as trails



for the more leisurely rider are available. The site also offers walking and hiking trails with beautiful waterfalls, a natural rock bridge which is 100 feet high and 82 feet long, and a breathtaking view 285 feet above the canyon

from atop the largest rock in Alabama. Enjoy miles of trails, campgrounds with covered stalls, day use areas with bathrooms, bath houses, and an entertainment center.

## Tiffin Motorhomes

105 2nd Street NW, Red Bay, AL 35582

256-356-8661; [www.tiffinmotorhomes.com](http://www.tiffinmotorhomes.com)

Tiffin, makers of the Allegro, Phaeton, Allegro Bus, and Zephyr models, is located in Red Bay. Their facility offers free factory tours, Monday through Friday at 9:30 a.m. No appointment is necessary, and it usually takes about one hour for the tour. Please call ahead for groups of 10 or more.

## North Alabama Hallelujah Trail



Two Franklin County historic churches are listed on the trail. Each church is at least 100 years old, is on its original site, and is still holding services today.

### Mount Pleasant Methodist Church

2950 Ligon Springs Rd., Russellville, AL

Since the early 1800s, this church's congregation has survived many tragedies, including a flu outbreak and a deadly tornado. The framing of the present structure maintains pegs and square nails that date prior to 1900.



Mount Pleasant

### First United Methodist Church of Red Bay

509 4th St. SW, Red Bay, AL

A missionary from Booneville, Mississippi, set out to preach under a brush arbor in northwest Alabama, which was called "Oak Grove." On split log seats, the community worshipped there until they were later able to build a cabin. After the Methodist Church became part of the Alabama circuit, Oak Grove changed their name to the current title. The church has grown from logs to an encased brick structure.



First United