



A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

Field Trips at the Railroad Depot

Everything you need to plan, book, and teach a one-stop
Alabama history field trip — aligned to the Alabama
Course of Study: Social Studies standards.

GRADES 3 • 4 • 5



Southern Railroad Depot Museum

PIEDMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY • 198 N CENTER AVE • PIEDMONT, AL 36272

piedmontalabamamuseum.com

History Your Students Can Step Into

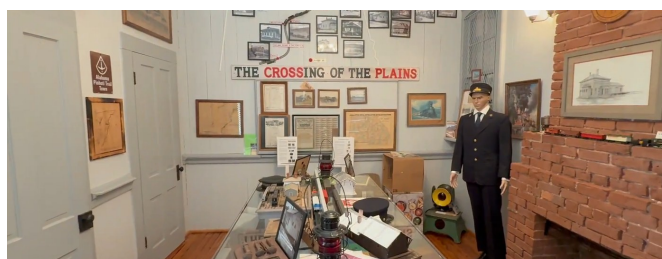


In 1868, the railroad turned a quiet crossroads called Cross Plains into a working Alabama town. Today, that same depot puts your students inside the story. At the Southern Railroad Depot Museum, students don't just hear history — they experience it: original railroad artifacts, a life-sized hollow stump “mailbox,” interactive touchscreen kiosks, a state-of-the-art topographic map program, and exhibits full of the everyday objects that built a community.

Everything we offer aligns with the **Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies** standards for Grades 3–5. Your trip can be set up as a **grade-focused tour** matched to the specific time periods your class studies — or as an **overall Alabama History experience** from our earliest displays to current Alabama happenings (see “Choose Your Experience,” page 4). Videos, kiosks, the topographic map program, MAKING ALABAMA content, and the Traveling Trunk are all customized to your grade before you arrive — so a class can visit in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade and never see a repeat.

Your Visit at a Glance

- **Length:** about 60 minutes of learning time, plus short transitions between stations
- **Format:** small rotating groups (see suggested group sizes, page 5) move station to station, 10–15 minutes per stop
- **Stations:** Railroad Room, self-guided history rooms, Traveling Trunk, Story Time / activity, plus the main hall kiosks & map program
- **Admission:** never more than **\$5 per student** — optional add-ons (lunch, souvenirs) itemized when you book
- **Take-homes:** a Junior Alabama Historian certificate and a free student return ticket
- **Accessibility:** fully ADA compliant — every area accommodates a wheelchair



The Southern & Seaboard Railroad Room



Preview the whole museum in under 3 minutes.

Scan the code (or visit our website) to watch the video tour — great to show your class before the trip.

Booking & Questions

Visit piedmontalabamamuseum.com to book a field trip or contact us for dates, rates, and meal options.
198 N Center Ave • Piedmont, AL 36272

When Should Each Grade Visit?

Grade 3 — early fall (September–October). A perfect introduction: students preview the geography, Native American history, and exploration topics they'll study all year.

Grade 4 — spring (April–May), as a review of statehood, the Creek War, the Civil War, and the railroad era — or early fall as a kickoff.

Grade 5 — spring (May). An unforgettable end-of-year review of the twentieth century, from world wars to civil rights, timed after testing wraps up.

Planning tips: December–January visits can be limited by cold weather, and most schools avoid the two weeks before testing. Since many systems need board approval plus 2–3 weeks for permission slips, contact us 6–8 weeks ahead to hold your date.

THE EXPERIENCE

The Museum, Room by Room



HOW THE RAILROAD BUILT A TOWN

Southern & Seaboard Railroad Room

10–12 per group

A short (about 5-minute) **grade-specific video** anchors this room, with pause points for questions. Students explore original railroad artifacts, historic station views, maps, and records from the 1868 line that brought regular mail, people, and freight — and transformed a crossroads into a working town.

SELF-GUIDED WALK-THROUGH

Hollow Stump, Cross Plains & Piedmont History Rooms

10–12 per group

These rooms run as a **self-guided walk-through with a grade-specific video and audio playing** as students look around. They'll see the town's earliest days — when a hollow sycamore stump served as the community mailbox — plus everyday tools, family keepsakes, dentist and barber equipment, uniforms, and yearbooks. Local students love spotting familiar names; visiting schools can move through at their own pace.

HANDS-ON ARTIFACTS, NEW EVERY GRADE

Traveling Trunk

12–15 per group

A trunk of touchable artifacts presented by a museum guide — and there's a **different trunk for each grade** (3, 4, and 5), so no field trip is ever a repeat. Groups are kept small and seated so every student can see.

ALABAMA'S BIGGER STORY

Main Hall: Topographic Map & MAKING ALABAMA Kiosks

up to 16

Our state-of-the-art topographic map A/V presentation and the MAKING ALABAMA touchscreen kiosks are **grade-specific and customized to the new state curriculum** — a different experience for each of grades 3, 4, and 5. Up to 16 students can explore the kiosks at once, one per monitor. Native American artifacts, the cotton and mill story, and the Songs of Alabama exhibit (80+ songs that mention Alabama) round out the hall.



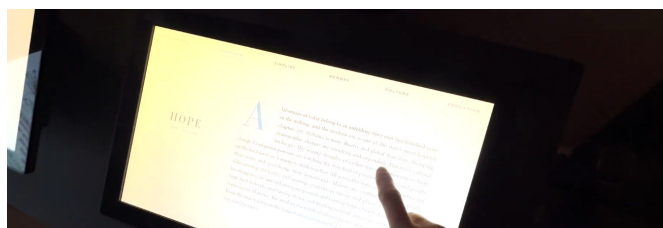
The Public Well — once the literal center of town: Piedmont's original boundaries were drawn a half mile in every direction from this spot.

NEW: READ-ALoud & ACTIVITY STATION

Story Time / Alabama Activity

15–20 per group

A fourth rotation station featuring an Alabama read-aloud, craft, or activity (weather permitting, outdoor options like historic games). See page 5 for suggested books by grade.



Touchscreen kiosks put Alabama's story at students' fingertips.

Choose Your Experience



The museum aligns with the **Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies** standards. Book your trip one of two ways:

OPTION A

Grade-Focused Tour — matched to your time period

Grade 3 — *Geography & Settlement (prehistory to early 1700s)*

- Topographic map journey through Alabama's land regions, rivers & climate — including the Piedmont region the town is named for
- Native American artifacts and the prehistoric culture periods
- Explorers & early settlement video segments (De Soto, the French at Mobile)
- Map skills in action: legend, scale, latitude & longitude on a giant living map
- State symbols, parks & landmarks segments

Grade 4 — *Colonies to 1900*

- "Trails to rails": how Indian trails led to settlers' roads, the Federal Road, and the railroad
- The Creek War, "Alabama Fever," and statehood on the kiosks and map program
- Cotton, trades & everyday life in 1800s Alabama
- Civil War & Reconstruction timeline stations
- The best artifact of all: an actual 1868 depot from the line that built the town

Grade 5 — *Twentieth Century to Present*

- Out of cotton, into the mills: Alabama industry at the turn of the century
- The world wars — Alabama's military bases (including nearby Fort McClellan) and real 1940s rationing stamps
- The civil rights trail with freeze-frame images: Montgomery, Anniston, Birmingham, Selma
- TVA, the Space Race at Redstone Arsenal, and modern Alabama
- Songs of Alabama: 80+ songs that mention our state

OPTION B

Overall Alabama History Experience — earliest displays to today

One sweeping tour — *great for mixed grades, GT groups, homeschool co-ops & middle/high school*

- The full "Sweet Home Alabama" topographic map journey, prehistory to present
- Native American artifacts through European exploration and settlement
- The railroad & town-building story — told inside the real 1868 depot
- The twentieth century: industry, world wars, and the civil rights trail
- Alabama music & culture, from the Songs of Alabama exhibit to today's happenings

This field trip aligns with the Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies standards for Grades 3–5. The visit can be focused on our grade's specific time period (Grade 3: geography & settlement; Grade 4: colonies to 1900; Grade 5: twentieth century to present) or booked as an overall Alabama history experience, with cross-curricular connections to ELA, science, math, and music.

Your Day at the Depot



Classes split into small rotating groups. Based on room sizes and past visits, here are our **suggested maximum group counts (students + chaperones together)** so every child can see, hear, and take part:

STATION	SUGGESTED GROUP SIZE	TIME	WHAT HAPPENS
Railroad Room	10–12	10–15 min	5-minute grade-specific video with pause points, then artifact exploration
Hollow Stump / Cross Plains / Piedmont Rooms	10–12	10–15 min	Self-guided walk-through with grade-specific video & audio playing
Traveling Trunk	12–15	10–15 min	Guided hands-on artifacts, seated so everyone can see; different trunk per grade
Story Time / Activity	15–20	10–15 min	Alabama read-aloud, craft, or historic game (weather permitting)
Main Hall Kiosks & Map Program	up to 16	10–15 min	One student per touchscreen; topographic map presentation for the group

A class of 60–75 works beautifully as four or five rotating groups. Allow about 5 minutes of transition time between stations — enough for students to look around before the next program begins. Tell us your numbers when you book and we'll build the rotation for you.

Suggested Read-Alouds for the Story Time Station

Grade 3

- *Y is for Yellowhammer: An Alabama Alphabet* — Carol Crane (state symbols & places)
- *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back* — Joseph Bruchac (Native American traditions)
- *Crossing Bok Chitto* — Tim Tingle (a Choctaw tale)

Grade 4

- *The Trail of Tears* — Joseph Bruchac (removal era)
- *Crossing Bok Chitto* — Tim Tingle
- *The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read* — Rita Lorraine Hubbard (born in 1848 Alabama)

Grade 5

- *Helen's Big World: The Life of Helen Keller* — Doreen Rappaport (Tuscumbia's own)
- *Preaching to the Chickens: The Story of Young John Lewis* — Jabari Asim (growing up in Troy, Alabama)
- *The Youngest Marcher* — Cynthia Levinson (Birmingham, 1963)

More titles

The ALSDE's teacher resources include a curated collection of children's picture books aligned to the Grade 4 and 5 standards — a great source for additional Story Time selections.

3

Museum Scavenger Hunt — Grade 3

10 questions, train room to main hall • teacher key (answers in red) • student copies at the museum



- 1** Our town's name, "Piedmont," has a special meaning. What does it mean?
Answer: "Foot of the mountain" — it's also the name of one of Alabama's land regions.
- 2** Find the big map of Alabama. Name one river you can see on it.
Answer: Any Alabama river — for example, the Coosa, which flows near Piedmont.
- 3** What kind of scientist studies people of the past through the objects they left behind?
Answer: An archaeologist.
- 4** Find a Native American artifact in the main hall. What do you think it was used for?
Answer: Open answer — tools, hunting, cooking, pottery, trade.
- 5** Long, long ago our town had a name that came from a tree. What was it?
Answer: Hollow Stump.
- 6** Before there was a post office, what did neighbors use the big hollow sycamore stump for?
Answer: A community mailbox — letters were left there for neighbors to carry along the way.
- 7** Watch the map program. Name one of Alabama's land regions.
Answer: Piedmont, Black Belt, Cumberland Plateau, Ridge and Valley, Highland Rim, or the Coastal Plains.
- 8** Find "The Public Well." Why did people come to this spot long ago?
Answer: It was the center of town — the community's watering hole where everyone gathered.
- 9** Which Spanish explorer traveled through Alabama long ago?
Answer: Hernando de Soto.
- 10** What state do we live in — and what is one state symbol you saw or heard about today?
Answer: Alabama; symbols include the yellowhammer (state bird) and the camellia (state flower).

4

Museum Scavenger Hunt — Grade 4

10 questions, train room to main hall • teacher key (answers in red) • student copies at the museum



- 1** Look at the front of the building. What railroad company's name is painted up top?

Answer: Selma, Rome & Dalton Railroad Co.

- 2** In what year did the railroad reach Cross Plains?

Answer: 1868.

- 3** Name two things the railroad brought to town on a regular schedule.

Answer: Any two of: mail, people, freight.

- 4** Before the railroad, what did travelers follow through Cross Plains?

Answer: Footpaths (Indian trails) and rough roads.

- 5** Find it on a kiosk: in what year did Alabama become a state?

Answer: 1819.

- 6** This town has had three names. List them in order.

Answer: Hollow Stump, Cross Plains, Piedmont.

- 7** Find The Public Well. What was special about this spot when the town became Piedmont?

Answer: It was the center of town — the town's boundaries were drawn a half mile in every direction from the well.

- 8** Find the railroad worker's lantern. Why did railroad men need lanterns?

Answer: To signal trains and see at night — lantern signals were how workers communicated.

- 9** What crop drove Alabama's economy for most of the 1800s?

Answer: Cotton.

- 10** Step outside (or look out the window): what colors is the caboose?

Answer: Red and yellow.

5

Museum Scavenger Hunt — Grade 5

10 questions, train room to main hall • teacher key (answers in red) • student copies at the museum



- 1 **Around 1900, Alabama towns like Piedmont began moving out of cotton farming and into what?**
Answer: Manufacturing — especially textile mills.
- 2 **Find the World War II rationing stamps. What were they used for?**
Answer: Limiting and sharing scarce goods (like food and gas) so supplies could go to the war effort.
- 3 **What nearby Army post trained soldiers during the World Wars?**
Answer: Fort McClellan (near Anniston).
- 4 **Who were the Tuskegee Airmen?**
Answer: The Alabama-trained Black military pilots of World War II.
- 5 **On the civil rights trail: whose arrest in Montgomery helped spark the bus boycott?**
Answer: Rosa Parks.
- 6 **What happened to the Freedom Riders' bus near Anniston — just down the road from here?**
Answer: It was attacked and burned in 1961.
- 7 **What New Deal program brought electricity and jobs to the Tennessee Valley?**
Answer: The TVA — Tennessee Valley Authority.
- 8 **What Huntsville arsenal helped launch America into the Space Race?**
Answer: Redstone Arsenal (home of the Marshall Space Flight Center).
- 9 **About how many songs in the Songs of Alabama exhibit mention our state?**
Answer: More than 80.
- 10 **Name one famous Alabama musician, athlete, or artist you saw or heard about today.**
Answer: Examples: Hank Williams, W.C. Handy, Nat King Cole, Hank Aaron, Joe Louis.

Before, During & After Your Visit



Before you come

- **Show the video tour** (QR code on page 2, or find it on our website). Students who know what to look for get far more from the visit.
- **Use our grade-level activity packets** — word searches, vocabulary matching, and crosswords built from your grade's topics, with teacher answer keys. Great for previewing vocabulary.
- **Ground the basics:** a quick lesson on city (Piedmont), county, and state (Alabama) pays off for younger students — the tour builds on that foundation.

During the visit

- Small groups (see page 5 for suggested sizes) rotate every 10–15 minutes, with about 5 minutes of transition time — enough for students to look around each room before the program starts.
- The Railroad Room and history rooms run short grade-specific videos with natural pause points — teachers are encouraged to stop, ask questions, and let students explore. Our volunteers keep everything safe and friendly so you can focus on your students.
- Bring the **museum scavenger hunt** for your grade (pages 6–8) — 10 questions students answer from the train room to the main hall.
- No more than three big topics per room — short, focused, and paced for elementary attention spans.

After you leave

- **Junior Alabama Historian Program:** every student earns a grade-level certificate. Visit in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade to collect all three.
- **Free return ticket:** each student takes home a ticket to come back with family (parents pay regular admission) — we can't cover everything in one hour, and we want them back!
- Use the activity packets as review, or have students write about their favorite artifact — a ready-made ELA connection.

Beyond social studies: cross-curricular connections

The grade-specific topographic map presentation and MAKING ALABAMA kiosks are customized to the new state curriculum for each grade — and the visit naturally reaches beyond history: **ELA** (primary sources, era vocabulary, writing from artifacts — pairs naturally with Alabama Studies Weekly), **science** (topography, land regions, weather, erosion, archaeology), **math** (map scale, timelines, freight and distance), and **music & arts** (Songs of Alabama, W.C. Handy to Hank Williams).

Planning Details & FAQ



How do we book?

Go to piedmontalabamamuseum.com and use the field trip booking page, or contact us directly. Tell us your grade level, class size, preferred dates, and whether you want the grade-focused tour or the overall Alabama history experience — we'll set the videos, kiosks, and trunk for your group and build your rotation.

What does it cost?

Student admission is never more than **\$5 per student**. When you book, we'll itemize your options — admission, optional lunch from local restaurants, and optional souvenirs — so you have one clear per-student price for permission slips. No child is ever turned away over cost; talk to us.

How long does a visit take?

Plan on about 60 minutes of learning time plus transitions — roughly 75–90 minutes on site if you're adding lunch on the deck.

How big should our groups be?

Smaller is better in the historic rooms. We suggest 10–12 (students + chaperones) in the Railroad Room and the Hollow Stump/Piedmont rooms, 12–15 at the Traveling Trunk, 15–20 at Story Time, and up to 16 at the kiosks (one per monitor). See the station table on page 5 — and we'll help you split your class when you book.

What about lunch?

Our outdoor deck seats a full class. We can help arrange meal options from local restaurants (pizza, bagged lunches) delivered to the museum, priced per student — or you're welcome to bring sack lunches. Ask about options for rainy or cold days.

Is the museum handicap accessible?

Yes — all areas are ADA compliant and accommodate a wheelchair, including the lower level, upper level, restroom, the caboose, and the deck. We're also planning to add more restroom capacity. Let us know about any specific needs when booking.

What do students need to bring?

Just themselves (and a lunch if you're not ordering). Everything else — activities, materials, certificates — is on us.

Do you work with private schools, homeschool groups, and co-ops?

Absolutely. The grade-focused tours or the overall Alabama history experience work for any group, on flexible scheduling — reach out and we'll set it up.

Can we do a smaller trial run first?

Yes — we welcome single classes and gifted/GT groups for walk-throughs before booking a full grade level.

Ready to Book?

Southern Railroad Depot Museum • Piedmont Historical Society

198 N Center Ave, Piedmont, AL 36272

piedmontalabamamuseum.com — contact us for dates, rates, and anything else you need.

Your North Alabama one-stop field trip for Grades 3, 4 & 5 social studies.