

The Frontier Era: Overton Farm

Educator Resource Packet



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Goals: To teach about the farm in a historic context while also demonstrating to students and visitors how this knowledge can be applied to current and future challenges focusing on history, environmental sustainability, landscape, and design.

Learning Outcomes:

Students should:

1. Be familiar with the history of the site including who the Overtons were, where they migrated from, and why they chose the site to settle.
2. Be familiar with the construction methods the Overtons used to build the homestead.
3. Be familiar with the farming practices the Overtons used.
4. Be familiar with how the Overtons grew, preserved, and stored their food.
5. Understand how the Overtons lived and worked by engaging in hands-on learning experiences.
6. Be able to connect ways in which the Overtons lived and worked to help solve current environmental, agricultural, design, and community problems.
7. Understand how TVA has helped shaped the northwest Alabama region and its waterways.
8. Have gained experience in teamwork and group problem-solving and honed leadership capabilities.

Settlement in Northwest Alabama

For over 9,000 years, the northwest portion of Alabama has been home to human life. The Stanfield-Worley Shelter located near Tuscumbia in present-day Colbert County contains evidence of some of the earliest human life known in the area. In 1960, Charles H. Worley discovered **artifacts** in the bluff shelter while on a hunting trip. Worley believed the artifacts were important so he contacted Dr. David L. DeJarnette, head of archaeology at the University of Alabama. Over the next two summers, archeologists and students worked to excavate the site. Using carbon dating, they found evidence the shelter had been occupied by humans in the Paleoindian period (~15,000 to 9,000 years ago) through the Mississippian period (1000-1550 CE).¹ Additional evidence of both Paleoindian and Mississippian period peoples have been discovered at other sites in northwest Alabama, including LaGrange rock shelter and on Koger Island located on the Tennessee River.

During the historic period (after European contact), small groups of Cherokees lived in spots near where the creeks emptied into the river where they lived until around 1650. After leaving, the Cherokee still retained their claim on the land for hunting grounds. Sometime around 1765, the Chickasaw began to build villages along Big Bear Creek and made a settlement in the great bend of the Tennessee River south of where Huntsville is today. The Cherokee and Chickasaw had been allies but the Cherokees resented this intrusion into their territory. In a battle between the two tribes in 1769 over the land, the Chickasaw were victorious. Despite this, the Cherokees never relinquished their claim to the land. The United States government

¹ Stephen M. Meredith, "Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, last modified August 4, 2016. <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3767>.

recognized both tribes' claim to the area because each side presented such a strong case to commissioners about the dispute.² Both the French and the English travelled the area to trade with the tribes. The French had a trading post at Muscle Shoals before 1715, and the Cherokee established villages in the area during the latter portions of the eighteenth century. One of the best known villages in the area was that of Chief Doublehead. Doublehead's village was located on the Tennessee River just east of Colbert's ferry. The village of Oka Kapassa was established around 1770, about a mile from the current town of Tuscumbia and was located on Coldwater, or Spring Creek. Following several clashes between the Native Americans and some of the earliest white settlers, including the murder of his brother, United States Army Col. James Robertson and a volunteer force of 130 men and two Chickasaw guides attacked the village of Oka Kapassa in late June 1787. Twenty-six Chickasaws, three French traders, and one white female were killed. Robertson and his force then burned the town. The six remaining French survivors were sent away and the force returned back to the Cumberland.³

Shortly after this battle, the area was opened for white settlement and **settlers** began to trickle into the area. Some Native Americans remained in the area but fighting between the natives and settlers was uncommon following Robertson's invasion. The town of Oka Kapassa changed its name to Tuscumbia after Chief Taski Ambi, who had sold the land.⁴ As more settlers recruited family and friends to come to the area, the numbers of people in Cherokee and Chickasaw territory grew. In 1812, the government sold 144,873 acres of land across the entire

² Nina Leftwich, *Two Hundred Years at Muscle Shoals* (Muscle Shoals, Colbert County Memorial Post No. 31 of the American Legion, 1998), 12.

³ *Ibid.* 13.

⁴ Tennessee Valley Authority Pickwick Watershed Team, "Bear Creek Reservoirs Land Management Plan," March 2001.

Mississippi Territory, but the Creek Wars in 1813-14 caused a sharp decrease in land sales for the territory. In 1813, only 30,261 acres were sold in the territory.⁵ The Mississippi Territory was established April 7, 1798, and existed until December 10, 1817, when the western portion was admitted to the Union as the state of Mississippi. The defeat of the Creeks on March 27, 1814, at Horseshoe Bend on the Tallapoosa River marked the end of the Creek War and the beginning of what would later become known as “Alabama fever,” a time when a large number of settlers poured into Alabama looking for cheap, fertile farmland.⁶ Prior to 1817, the entire area that is now the state of Alabama was part of the Mississippi Territory. Congress established an act in that year making Alabama its own territory and set up government offices in Huntsville to bring some stability to the region. James Graham of Lincoln County, North Carolina remarked, “The Alabama fever [sic] rages here with great violence and has carried off vast numbers of our citizens... there is no question this fever is contagious... for as soon as one neighbor who visits another who has just returned from Alabama he immediately discovers the same symptoms which are exhibited by the one who has seen the alluring Alabama.” These settlers mostly came from Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia. Many of the settlers had passed through Alabama with Andrew Jackson when he marched from New Orleans to Columbia, Tennessee, after the Battle of New Orleans and remembered the beauty and great expanses of wilderness waiting to be settled.⁷ In the decade prior to 1820, the population of Alabama increased more than 1,000 percent with most of that increase occurring after 1815.⁸ Settlers coming into the

⁵ William Warren Rogers, Robert David Ward, Leah Rawls Atkins, and Wayne Flint, *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 54.

⁶ *Ibid.* 55.

⁷ Donald Davidson, *The Tennessee: The Old River: Frontier to Secession, Volume One* (Nashville: J.S. Sanders & Company, 1946), 231.

⁸ Rogers, Ward, Atkins, and Flynt, *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State*, 54.

northwest portions of Alabama travelled along the Natchez Trace, which began as a path used by Native Americans, and later down the Byler Road, which was established in 1819 and connected Nashville to Tuscaloosa and ran through the Shoals.⁹

As white settlers arrived into northwest Alabama, they started settling a region that would come to be known as the Bear Creek **watershed**. The watershed includes the majority of Franklin County and also smaller portions of Marion, Colbert, Winston, and Lawrence counties in Alabama and Tishomingo County, Mississippi. The watershed covers 801 square miles, or 513,121 acres.¹⁰ The majority of the Bear Creek Watershed lies within the Fall Line Hills district of the eastern Gulf Coastal Plain section of the Coastal Plains Province. The terrain of the Bear Creek region is hilly. The region has a **temperate climate** with hot summers and mild winters and an abundance of flora and fauna.¹¹ Average yearly rainfall in the watershed is 54 inches.¹² This abundance of **flora** and **fauna** is one of the reasons the watershed area was so attractive to settlers.

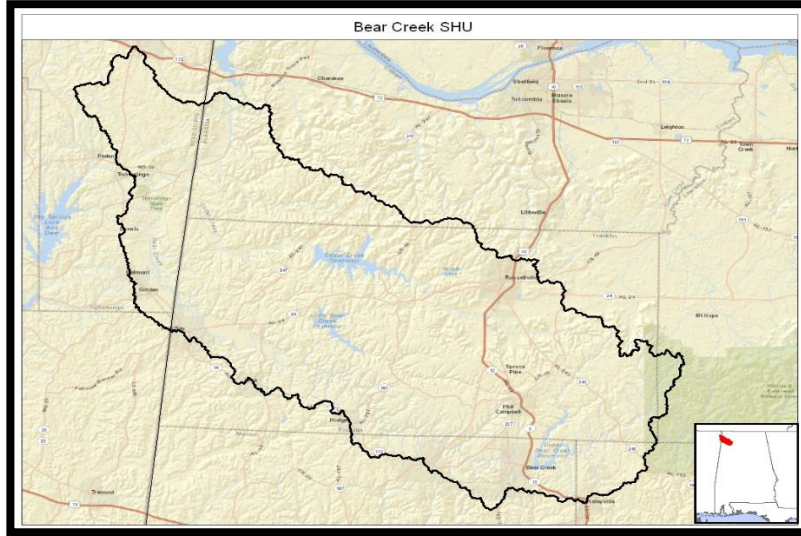
⁹ Leftwich, *Two Hundred Years at Muscle Shoals*, 41.

¹⁰ "Bear Creek", Alabama Rivers and Streams Network, accessed June 11, 2018.
<http://www.alh2o.org/bear-creek>.

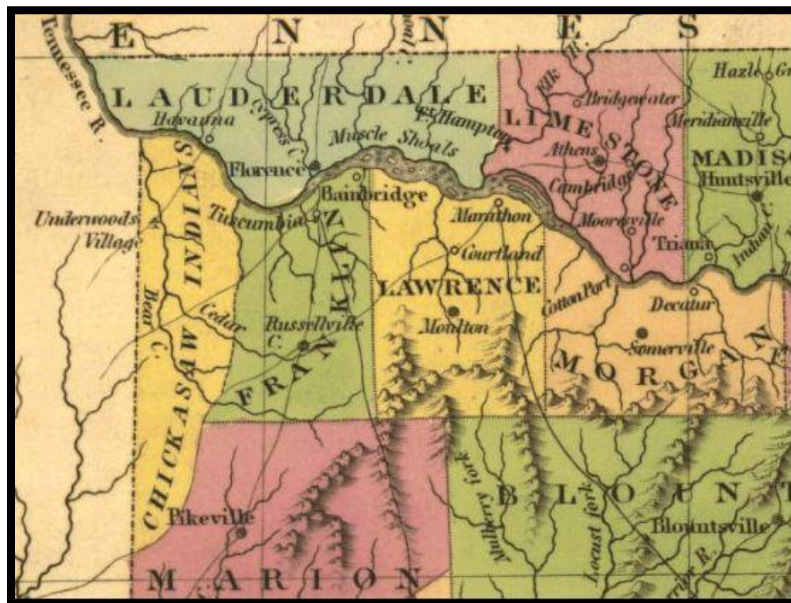
¹¹ Tennessee Valley Authority Pickwick Watershed Team, "Bear Creek Reservoirs Land Management Plan," March 2001.

¹² Tennessee Valley Authority Office of Health and Environmental Science, "Bear Creek Project," December 29, 1972.

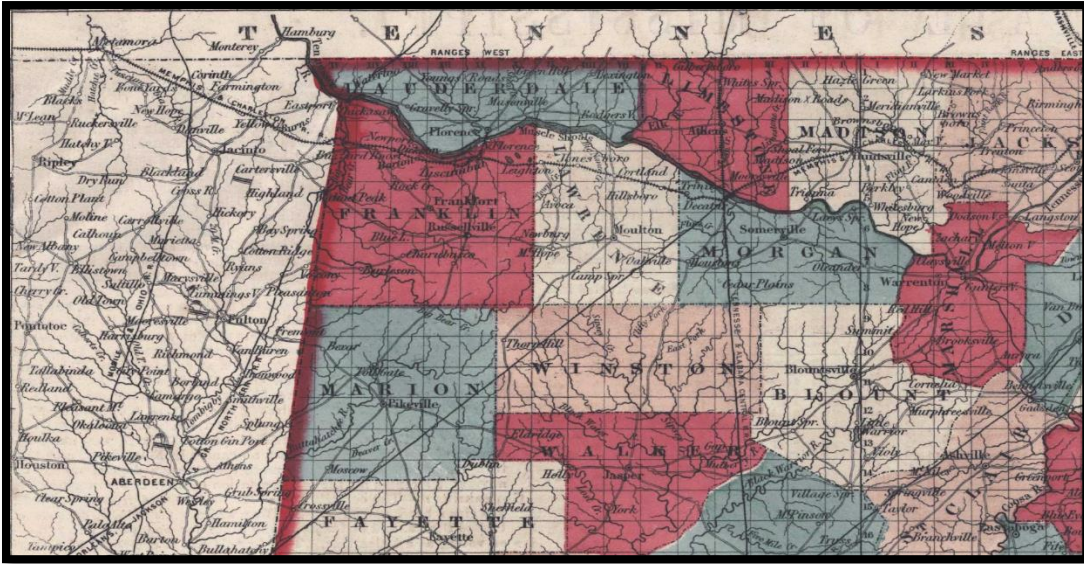
Map of Bear Creek Watershed



1824 Map of Northwest Alabama



1859 Map of Northwest Alabama



A Brief History of Overton Farm

It was during those “Alabama fever” years that the Overton family first made its way into northwest Alabama. In 1815, Abner Overton travelled from his home in North Carolina to near what is Cherokee, Alabama, today to sell his tobacco crop. In 1817, he returned with another load of tobacco, this time taking the load to near what is Hodges, Alabama, today, and decided to settle on this land. Abner Overton was struck by the abundance of wildlife, available drinking water, and fertile land along Bear Creek. Overton knew the area would be good for farming so he registered 160 acres in Pontotoc, Mississippi, as Alabama was not yet a state and was still part of the Mississippi Territory.¹³

About two years after moving to the Hodges area, Abner married Judy May. Their first home located on the property was a 20-by-30 foot one-room log cabin. During this time period, homes were constructed with trees located on the property that were cut down and hewn into logs with a **broad-axe**. When the logs were ready, neighbors came and helped construct the home. These “house raisings” were social events for the community. During a time when a person’s nearest neighbor might be miles away, these social events were a very important part of creating a community. During construction, those families who had traveled over several miles to attend the house raising camped in the surrounding woods. The first home on the property took three days to construct. On the first day the logs were hewn from the cut trees and moved to the location of the house with horses and oxen. The foundation was made of two logs laid parallel and the floor was made of logs split in half long ways, called **puncheons**. These puncheons

¹³ James A. Norwood, *An Early History of the Bear Creek Watershed Area of Northwest Alabama*, (September 1971), 9.

were laid flat side up with their ends laying on the foundation logs, creating a flat surface. On the second day the neighbors came and helped raise the walls of the house. The logs for the walls were rolled up inclined poles and into place. Men placed at the corners used axes to cut notches in the logs and set them into place. Along the top of the house, ridge poles were laid six feet apart and boards were nailed across these ridge poles. On the third day, the neighbors finished the house and completed tasks such as building shutters for the windows and building the doors for the house.¹⁴ Without the help of neighbors, the Overtons would have spent a great deal more time building their home.

In 1838, the Overton family began to construct their second home. The first room was built that year, and over the years rooms were added until it became a five-room, **dogtrot**-style house.¹⁵ Dogtrot-style homes were very popular in this region because the cooking area was kept separate from the rest of the home and the breezeway between the sections allowed for airflow during the hot, humid Alabama summers.¹⁶ Part of this structure still stands on the property and research suggests that two of the sections are from the original dogtrot home. One of the things that makes the dogtrot house at Overton so interesting is the use of three different types of notches in the construction. Normally only one type of notch was used. It is not known why Overton chose to incorporate three different types. The notches used were the Ridge Lock, Saddle Notch, and **Dovetail** (see drawings). Notches were incorporated in building to reduce the amount of space between logs that would have to be filled in and also to hold the logs securely

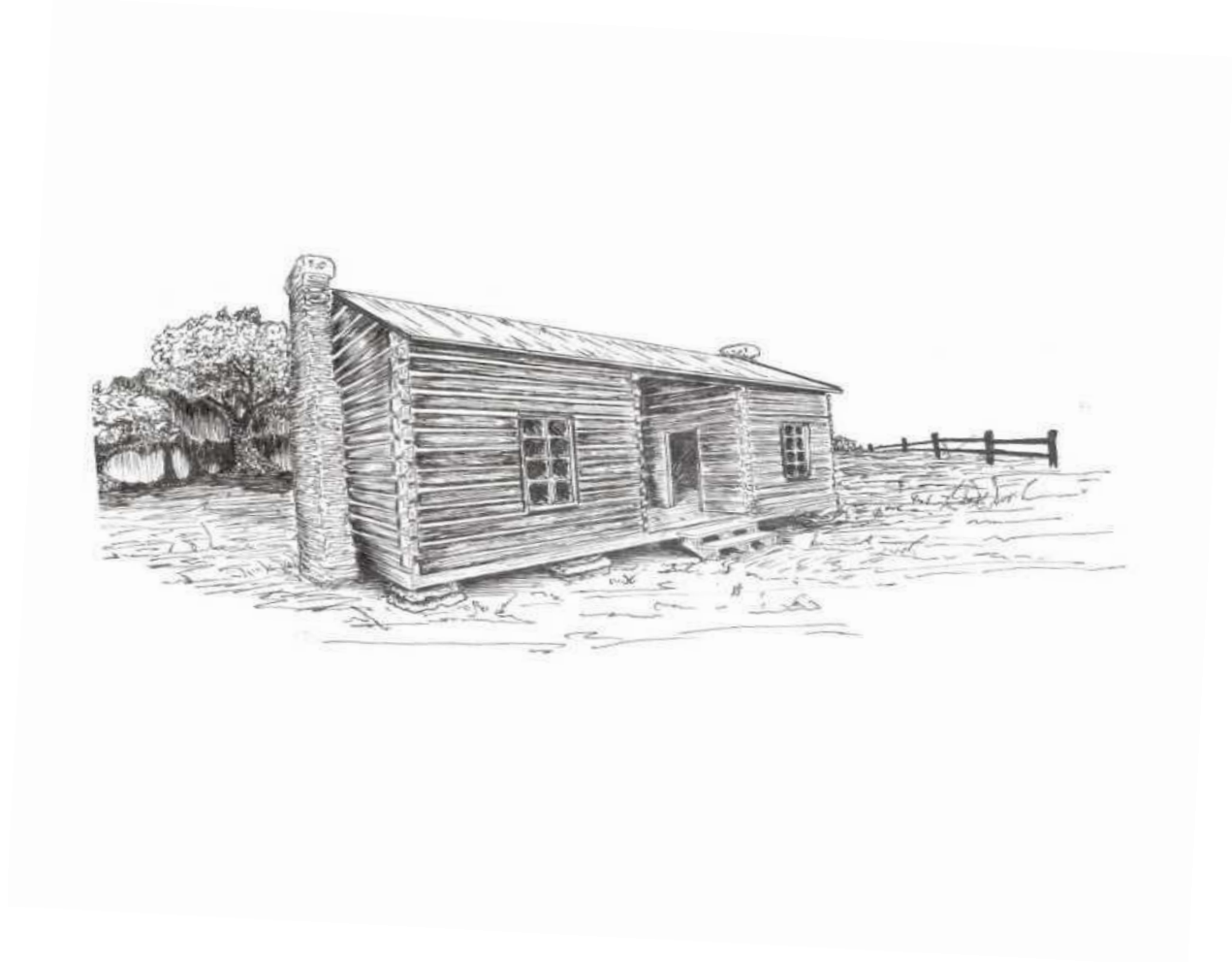
¹⁴ Norwood, *An Early History of the Bear Creek Watershed*, 9-10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 10.

¹⁶ Natalie Way, "What is a Dogtrot House?" Realtor.com, October 24, 2016. <https://www.realtor.com/advice/buy/what-is-a-dogtrot-home/>.

into place.¹⁷ Various outbuildings still stand on the property that were constructed over the years after the Overton family settled the land. These buildings served as smokehouses, corn cribs, stables, tool sheds, workshops, and for many other uses on the farm.

Example of Dog-trot House

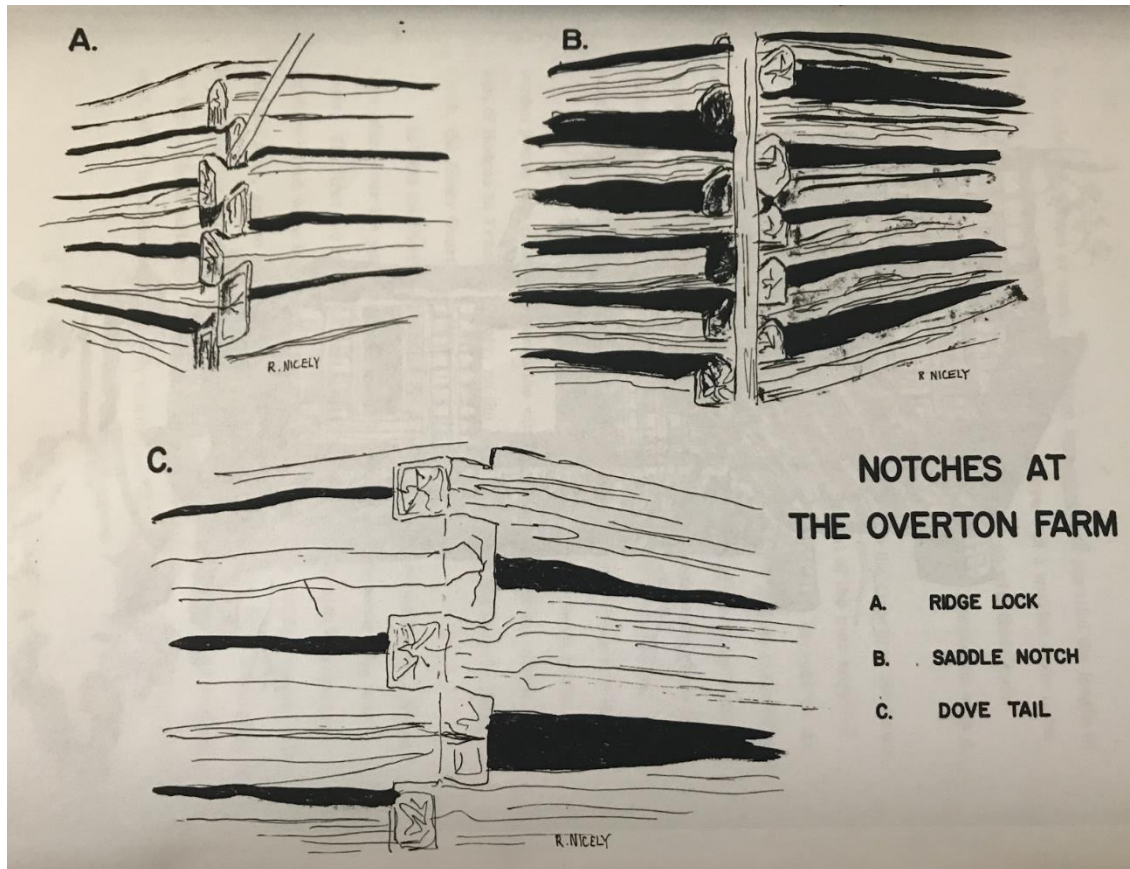


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¹⁷ "Log Joinery," Woodlandia, accessed June 12, 2018, http://www.woodlandia.ca/technologies/log-home-basics-1/copy2_of_log-home-basics.

¹⁸ Drawing by Jason Behel

Notches¹⁹



¹⁹ Norwood, drawings by R. Nicely, *An Early History of the Bear Creek Watershed*, 12.

The farm consisted of four main fields. Corn was a staple at Overton Farm because it was fairly easy to grow and could be used to feed both the family and the livestock. Beans and peas were planted along with the corn so the vines could be supported by the corn stalks and make more effective use of the field area. The Overtons grew other vegetables between the rows of corn, including pumpkins, tomatoes, potatoes, and watermelon.²⁰ Along the edges of the corn fields near the banks of Bear Creek, Abner planted numerous fruit trees to also help supply the family with food. Dried fruits and vegetables were stored in the “fruit house,” a small structure that had two walls and was constructed of logs using the ridglock-style notch.²¹ The Overton family raised cattle, hogs, sheep, mules, and horses. Mules were used for plowing the fields and horses were used to pull the wagons. The sheep produced wool that was used to make socks and the excess was sold. The cows provided milk and the Overtons raised hogs for meat. The Overtons sold the excess wool, meat, fruits, and vegetables or traded for other items the household needed. Furs from animals such as beaver, mink, and skunk that were trapped or hunted on the property were also sold or used for trading.²²

Four generations of Overtons lived and worked on the farm. The last resident, Bedford Forrest Overton, lived there until 1946, when he moved to a new home in the area. From 1946 until 1969, the farm was used by Overton descendants for pasture, with the exception of two years that it was rented to Lit Bickerstaff during 1959-1960. In 1969, the Tennessee Valley Authority acquired the farm as part of the Bear Creek Water Control Project in its effort to build a dam and control damage from flooding, although TVA allowed the Overton family to continue

²⁰ Ibid. 13.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. 14-15.

using the cemetery on the property. As part of the Bear Creek Water Control Project, TVA established education center on the property using the homestead as an educational tool to teach school-age children about Alabama **frontier** life and the environment along Bear Creek. Until 2013, when the center closed, children attending the Bear Creek Education Center were taught appreciation and **stewardship** for the outdoors and environment and also learned how frontier-era practices could be applied as solutions to current-day problems.

Vocabulary

1. **Artifact:** a handmade object, such as a tool, or the remains of one, or a shard of pottery, characteristic of an earlier time or cultural stage, especially such an object found at an archaeological excavation.
2. **Settler:** a person who settles in an area, typically a place with no or few previous inhabitants.
3. **Frontier:** the land or territory that forms the furthest extent of a country's settled or inhabited regions.
4. **Watershed:** an area or ridge of land that separates waters flowing to different rivers, basins, or seas or an area or region drained by a river, river system, or other body of water.
5. **Temperate:** relating to or denoting a region or climate characterized by mild temperatures.
6. **Climate:** the weather conditions prevailing in an area in general or over a long period.
7. **Flora:** the plants of a particular region, habitat, or geological period.
8. **Fauna:** the animals of a particular region, habitat, or geological period.
9. **Broad-axe:** an ax with a wide head and a short handle.
10. **Puncheon:** a rough board or other length of wood, usually with one flattened side, used for flooring or building.
11. **Dogtrot house:** a style of house that was common throughout the southeastern United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The main style point was a large breezeway through the center of the house to cool occupants in the hot southern climate.

12. **Dovetail:** a joint formed by one or more tapered projections (tenons) on one piece that interlock with corresponding notches or recesses (mortises) in another.
13. **Stewardship:** the responsible overseeing and protection of something considered worth caring for and preserving.

Name: _____

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net [Word Search Maker](http://www.TheTeachersCorner.net)

Overton Farm Word Search

J G E Z F C S I Y C B I R C N R O C G E
R V N L I H P S A E W A T E R S H E D Y
C U J A B C G U Q A L N B O B G N K F M
U H K F W T T L A S P O H S K R O W B F
R H R L E O W O H Z D R I D G E L O C K
V U O Z R N Q K D K S O M D T X H L X I
X T M T J E U C U K P M H D B Q Z F W E
H A G B P L K A B N E R O V E R T O N T
O O Z I A D A G S F D G K K W V L V S A
D S N Q B D V T Q Q Q U W B E A N S V P
G M O U M A T G N T F R J R D H E I L W
E T E T E S U Q X E U A X P H L O Y B J
S P H C A Q A V F P M V R B U B K U Y F
P W C I L L P R C K P N F M J Z H C S L
Z N N G F W O I G O C M O X Y N U L B E
C I U M F N J K K E E R C R A E B W H X
N V P T T F T B N P K L S Q I E O V C Z
R L O I L I A T E V O D D H E V K R E F
U F E T P E T V S E T T L E M E N T H P
E R D M E X A D A O R B X Y D S L E F H

ABNEROVERTON

BEANS

DOVETAIL

FRONTIER

PUNCHEON

SETTLEMENT

WATERSHED

BEARCREEK

CORNCRIB

ENVIRONMENTAL

HODGES

RIDGELOCK

SMOKEHOUSE

WORKSHOP

BROADAXE

DOGTROT

FARM

MULE

SADDLENOTCH

TVA

Name: _____

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net [Word Search Maker](http://www.TheTeachersCorner.net)

Overton Farm Word Search

J G E Z F C S I Y C B I R C N R O C G E
R V N L I H P S A E W A T E R S H E D Y
C U J A B C G U Q A L N B O B G N K F M
U H K F W T T L A S P O H S K R O W B F
R H R L E O W O H Z D R I D G E L O C K
V U O Z R N Q K D K S O M D T X H L X I
X T M T J E U C U K P M H D B Q Z F W E
H A G B P L K A B N E R O V E R T O N T
O O Z I A D A G S F D G K K W V L V S A
D S N Q B D V T Q Q Q U W B E A N S V P
G M O U M A T G N T F R J R D H E I L W
E T E T E S U Q X E U A X P H L O Y B J
S P H C A Q A V F P M V R B U B K U Y F
P W C I L L P R C K P N F M J Z H C S L
Z N N G F W O I G O C M O X Y N U L B E
C I U M F N J K K E E R C R A E B W H X
N V P T T F T B N P K L S Q I E O V C Z
R L O I L I A T E V O D D H E V K R E F
U F E T P E T V S E T T L E M E N T H P
E R D M E X A D A O R B X Y D S L E F H

ABNEROVERTON

BEANS

DOVETAIL

FRONTIER

PUNCHEON

SETTLEMENT

WATERSHED

BEARCREEK

CORNCRIB

ENVIRONMENTAL

HODGES

RIDGELOCK

SMOKEHOUSE

WORKSHOP

BROADAXE

DOGTROT

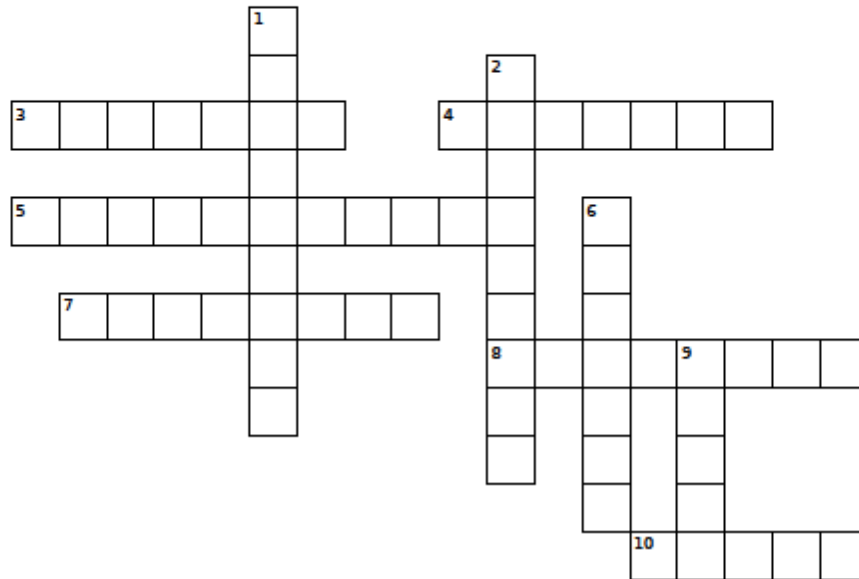
FARM

MULE

SADDLENOTCH

TVA

Crossword Puzzle



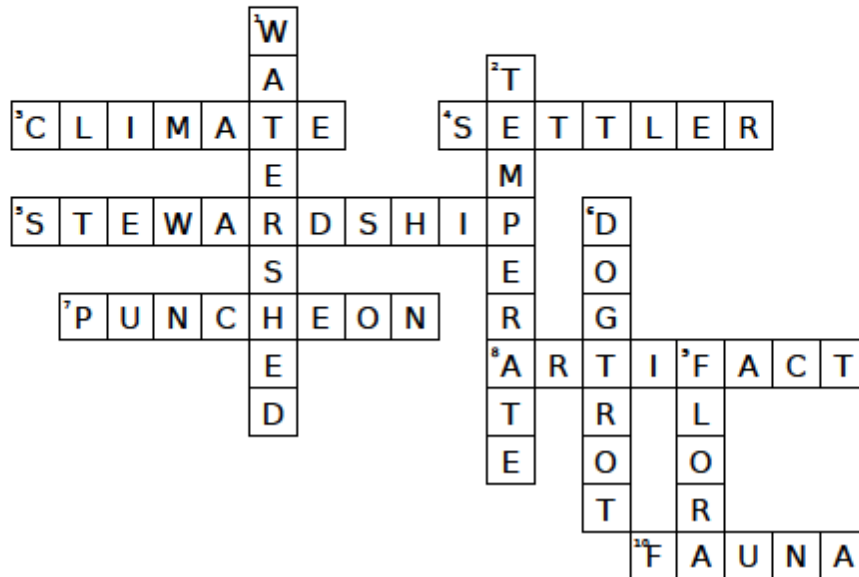
Down:

1. an area or ridge of land that separates waters flowing to different rivers, basins, or seas or an area or region drained by a river, river system, or other body of water.
2. relating to or denoting a region or climate characterized by mild temperatures.
6. is a style of house that was common throughout the southeastern United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The main style point was a large breezeway through the center of the house to cool occupants in the hot southern climate.
9. the plants of a particular region, habitat, or geological period.

Across:

3. the weather conditions prevailing in an area in general or over a long period.
4. a person who settles in an area, typically one with no or few previous inhabitants.
5. the responsible overseeing and protection of something considered worth caring for and preserving.
7. a rough board or other length of wood, usually with one flattened side, used for flooring or building.
8. a handmade object, such as a tool, or the remains of one, or a shard of pottery, characteristic of an earlier time or cultural stage, especially such an object found at an archaeological excavation.
10. the animals of a particular region, habitat, or geological period.

Crossword Puzzle



Down:

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Test Questions

Multiple Choice

1. What was the name of the bluff shelter discovered near Tuscumbia in 1960 that contained evidence of human life from the Paleoindian period through the Mississippian period?
 - a. The Tuscumbia Bluff Shelter
 - b. The LaGrange Rock Shelter
 - c. The Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter
 - d. The Mississippian Rock Shelter

2. What two Native American groups were the last to inhabit northwest Alabama?
 - a. Cherokees and Chickasaws
 - b. Chickasaws and Choctaws
 - c. Choctaws and Creeks
 - d. Cherokees and Paleoindians

3. The town of _____ was raided by Col. James Robertson and a volunteer force of 130 men and two Chickasaw guides. The town was later named Tuscumbia.
 - a. Bear Creek
 - b. Sheffield
 - c. Oka Kapassa
 - d. Miccosukee

4. After the War of 1812, settlers rushed into the state of Alabama from Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia to buy cheap, fertile land. This rush was called _____.
 - a. Mississippi Territory Measles
 - b. Alabama Fever
 - c. Settlement Sickness
 - d. Alabama Rush

5. In the decade prior to 1820, the population of Alabama increased more than _____ percent with most of that increase occurring after 1815.
- 200
 - 500
 - 1000
 - 2500
6. The majority of this area lies within the Fall Line Hills district of the eastern Gulf Coastal Plain section of the Coastal Plains Province. The terrain of this region is hilly and has a temperate climate with hot summers and mild winters with an abundance of flora and fauna. It covers the majority of Franklin County, and also smaller portions of Marion, Colbert, Winston, and Lawrence counties in Alabama and Tishomingo County, Mississippi.
- Bear Creek Water Area
 - Pickwick Lake
 - Tennessee Valley Authority
 - Bear Creek Watershed
7. In 1815, Abner Overton travelled from his home in North Carolina to near what is Cherokee, Alabama, today to sell what crop?
- Watermelon
 - Tobacco
 - Beans
 - Corn
8. When the Overton family constructed its log home, the floor was made of logs split in half long ways. These logs were laid flat side up with their ends laying on the foundation logs, creating a flat surface. These logs were called:
- Saddle Notches
 - Dovetails
 - Puncheons
 - Flat Logs
9. Abner Overton built his cabin in what style?
- Chicken Strut
 - Walk Through
 - Horse Canter
 - Dog Trot

10. _____ was the main crop grown by the Overton's because it could be used for both human and animal feed.

- a. Beans
- b. Corn
- c. Wheat
- d. Carrots

Multiple Choice Answer Key

1. C. The Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter
2. A. Cherokee and Chickasaw
3. C. Oka Kapassa
4. B. Alabama Fever
5. C. 1000
6. D. Bear Creek Watershed
7. B. Tobacco
8. C. Puncheons
9. D. Dogtrot
10. B. Corn

Use of Primary Documents

Transcript of letter written by A. Powell to Weldon Powell. Have students read the transcription and answer the questions at the end. ²³

Return address: Tuscumbia

July 19th

Addressed to:

Thomas Weldon Powell esqr

Hendersonville,
Nottoway
County

Virginia

Mail
(Page 1)

Franklin County Alabama
(near Tuscumbia) 12 July 1824

Dear Brother

I hasten to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 17th March 1824—it was very acceptable but would have been much more so if it had been dated 17th March 1823, and had come to hand twelve months sooner—you acknowledge yourself a bad correspondent which mitigates the crime in some degree and shows a noble spirit to confess our errors; but permit me to say that the apology contained in your letter for being a "bad correspondent" is not entirely satisfactory: but I dismiss the subject hoping an apology will not hereafter be necessary for a good one can hardly be offered for not writing oftener than once in twelve months.

I presume from the superscription of your letter (it being directed to Huntsville) that you are not apprised of my having left that section of country—I have removed—seventy five miles lower down the Tenn. River—I am now in the County of Franklin on the south bank of the river at the foot of the Muscle Shoals within four miles of the Town of Tuscumbia and within eight miles of the town of Florence the first of which is on the south side the river—the latter on the north something like Manchester and Richmond in Va.—they are even now places of great trade and considerable importance but are waging an eternal war against each other—which will eventually predominate is at this time uncertain. It is only four miles west of me to the Chickasaw nation—here are Game and fish in abundance which may be procured with but little trouble to those who are fond of

²³ "Using Primary Sources in the Classroom Settlement Unit," Alabama Department of Archives and History, updated March 3, 2010, <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/teacher/settle/set3.html>.

the chase or at a small expence to those not fond of hunting.
A fine Turkey or Venison ham (not Rams hams as imposed on you)
may be
(Page 2)

be had of the Aborigines (who pass my door daily going to town)
at 25 cents for either.

This section of country is considered the most desirable part of Alabama—indeed it is almost a Paradise—it being entirely below the Muscle Shoals as before observed and consequently at the head of Steamboat navigation—the country is certainly much more healthy than where we were raised—the lands rich and fertile in the extreme, and well adapted to the culture of cotton which you know is the Staple of our country. It is no hard matter to make more than we can pick out by the next planting time besides plenty of corn &etc.—We may be considered nearer market than you are as it costs us less to freight our produce to N. Orleans than it does you to Waggon yours to Petersberg or Richmond: The lands in this neighbourhood sold at the land sales at from 10 to 40 \$ per acre—the highest priced lands and of course the best have reverted to Government under the Act of Congress entitled an Act for the relief of Land Purchasers but in fact an Act for the relief of land Speculators—the lands so forfeited will in all probability be again bro.t into market sometime next year when it is hoped they may be had at fair prices, however there are various opinions on this subject—great preparations are making and as we get tolerable prices for our cotton and that in good money, choice tracts may again go high; however the land grabbers are pretty well done over and as the lands are now to be sold for cash instead of a long credit as before, hopes are entertained that they may be had at moderate prices.

If you have not abandoned the idea of Alabama and as your pecuniary matters are in all probability much changed since I advised you not to move to Ala. I will suggest for your con-
(Page 3)

consideration the propriety of your sending as many hands as you can conveaniently purchase and settle them near me where I can superintend them, and then for you to come at some future period.

I am informed by letter from Amanda since her marriage that her husband self (torn) Peter intend coming to this country this fall or Winter. I earnestly rec-commend them to do so as I think it would greatly promote their interest—She also informs me that our mother is disposed to come here, if so, please assist her in making the necessary arrangements as I am certain it would promote her interest and happiness and ultimately be of considerable (illegible) to us all particularly the younger children—I will come to Va. Myself and assist her in making the necessary arrangements and in moving; therefore encourage her to come.

Please inform me what has been done with the land

in Cumberland and ^all about that affair? Also inform me what has been done with Standfields suit for the recovery of boy Isham and wheather a final settlement of Grandfathers Es.t has been made, &etc.

John H. Hundley a friend of mine will probably call on you sometime in next month on his way to Brunswick to get a bit of a wife—consider him a Gentleman. Inform me how many children your wife has their name sex &etc.

Your acquaintance and your wife, [Ealiva](?) were well a short time since? Parson Leigh often preaches in Tuscumbia? It is reported that Eliza [Towne](?) is shortly to be married to a Mr. Bester a baptist minister.

Please send your Newspapers after reading them and I.I send you mine in return—This leaves us in good health—may it find you all enjoying a like blessing—Be sure to write on or before the 17th March next. Yours as usual

A. Powell

Below is a scanned copy of the letter. Show the letter to your class on a large screen to allow students to see the difference in letters from the settlement and the means of communicating today.

1. Ask students to identify the person who wrote the letter and the person to whom it was addressed.
2. Ask students to make a list of all the topics discussed in the letter.
3. Ask students to describe the writer, i.e. educated, poor, adventurous, resourceful, etc.
4. Discuss why the writer complained about the lack of news. What other clue did you find that indicated that the writer was relatively isolated and that news of any kind was highly desirable?
5. Using a current highway map of Alabama, ask students to locate the home of the writer.
6. What references indicate that settlers and Native Americans were not always at war?
7. How did the writer describe the land where he lived?
8. What does "staple of our country " mean? Why is this important?
9. Where, how, and why did the writer ship his produce to market?
10. Who is the writer encouraging to move to Alabama? How will he help to make their move easier?

Franklin County, Alabama
(near Tusculum) 15 July 1834.

Dear Brother

I hasten to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 17th March 1834 - it was very acceptable but would have been much more so if it had been dated 17th Nov. 1833, and had come to hand several months sooner - you acknowledge yourself a bad correspondent which mitigates the crime in some degree and which would appear to excuse any errors that pertained in so that the apology contained in your letter for being a "bad correspondent" is not entirely satisfactory but I submit the subject of sending an apology will not bear further discussion - except for a good one can hardly be expected from writing several lines once or twice a month.

I presumed from the superscription of your letter (it being directed to Tusculum) that you are not advised of my having left that section of country - I have discovered a sandy plain five miles lower down the Green river - I am now in the County of Franklin on the south bank of the river on the foot of the Muscle Shoals within five miles of the town of Tusculum and within eight miles of the town of Florence the town of which is on the north side the river - the latter on the north something like Manchester and Richmond in Va. They are even now places of great trade and commerce - All improved but are waging an eternal war against each other - which with eventual predominance is at this time uncertain. It is only four miles east of me to the Cherokee nation - There are lands and fish in abundance which may be procured with but little trouble to those who are fond of

in the... they are...
-the important but are waging an eternal war against
each other - which with ordinary precautions is at this time
impossible. It is only four miles west of me to the Chickasaw
nation - Here are Game and fish in abundance which may
be procured with but little trouble to those who are fond of
the chase or at a small expense to those who are fond of hunting.
A few Turkey or Honion Land (not Rains Land as inscribed on you) may be

be had of the Aborigines (who pass my door daily going to town)
at 25 Cents for either.
This section of Country is considered the most desirable part of
Alabama - indeed it is almost a Paradise - it being entirely below
the parallel of 34° as before observed and consequently at the head
of Steam-boat Navigation - The Country is certainly much
more healthy than where we were raised - the Land is rich
and fertile in the extreme, and well adapted to the
cultivation of Cotton which you know is the Staple of our
Country. It is no hard matter to make more than we
can find out by the more glowing and better planting
corn &c. - It may be considered a more market than you are in
or east or up to freight our produce to St. Orleans than
to send you to New York or to Petersburg or Richmond.
The Land in this neighborhood sold at the land sales at from
10 to 40 \$ per Acre - the highest priced Land and of
course the best have been reserved to Government under the Act
of Congress entitled an Act for the relief of Land Speculators
but in fact an Act for the relief of Land Speculators, the
Land as forfeited was in all probability be again be sold
another time and next year when it is hoped they may be
had at your prices, however these and various Opinions on
this subject - great Preparations are making and we see no
doubt that prices for our cotton and that in good manner,

and fertile in the extreme, and well adapted to the
culture of cotton which you know is the staple of our
country. It is no hard matter to make more than we
can find and by the next planting some hundred plantings of
corn &c. It may be considered nearer market than you are as
it is less to freight our produce to St. Orleans than
it is you to bring your goods to Petersburg or Richmond.
The lands in the neighborhood of the said sales are from
10 to 4000000000 - the highest priced lands and of
course the best have been taken to Government under the Act
of Congress entitled an Act for the relief of Land Purchasers
but in fact an Act for the relief of Land Speculators the
lands as forfeited lands in all probability be again but with
some variations in price - when it is hoped they may be
had at your prices, however there are various objections on
this subject - great preparations are making and as we see
tablets which for our cotton and that in good quantity
which facts may again go high, however the land jobbing
are truly well done over and as the lands are near to be set
for cash instead of a long credit as before, hopes are entertained
that they may be had at moderate prices.
If you have not abandoned the idea of Alabama and as your
speculative matters are in all probability much changed since
I last had your note to me. I will suggest in your own

...to this country ... I think it would greatly promote
their interests. I have also informed me that my mother is desirous
to come to you if it please you in making the necessary
arrangements as I am certain it would be of considerable value
to us particularly the younger children. I should
like to see you and give you in making the necessary
arrangements and in moving, I beg to assure you
I am
Please inform me what has been done with the land
in Cumberland and what the affairs. Also inform me
what has been done with the affairs with you the country
by John and whether a final settlement of
land to her has been made.
I should be extremely glad if you will probably call
on you sometime in your way to the country
to get a bag of a wife - consider them a husband.
I should be glad to see many children your wife has the
names are
Your affectionate and your mother's
were well a short time since. I am the only one
preaches in Cumberland. It is reported that Elizabeth
is shortly to be married to a Mr. Pender a local minister.
Please send your affectionate regards to your mother and
I should be glad to see you in return. I am in good
health may it find you all enjoying a like blessing. We shall
be sorry to hear of the death of any of your friends.
W. J. Pender

Curriculum Standards

Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies Standard (2010)

4th Grade: Alabama Studies

4.1

▪ 4.1.1 Students will:

Compare historical and current economic, political, and geographic information about Alabama on thematic maps, including weather and climate, physical-relief, waterway, transportation, political, economic development, land-use, and population maps (Economics, Geography, History, Civics and Government).

▪ 4.1.2 Students will practice:

Describing types of migrations as they affect the environment, agriculture, economic development, and population changes in Alabama

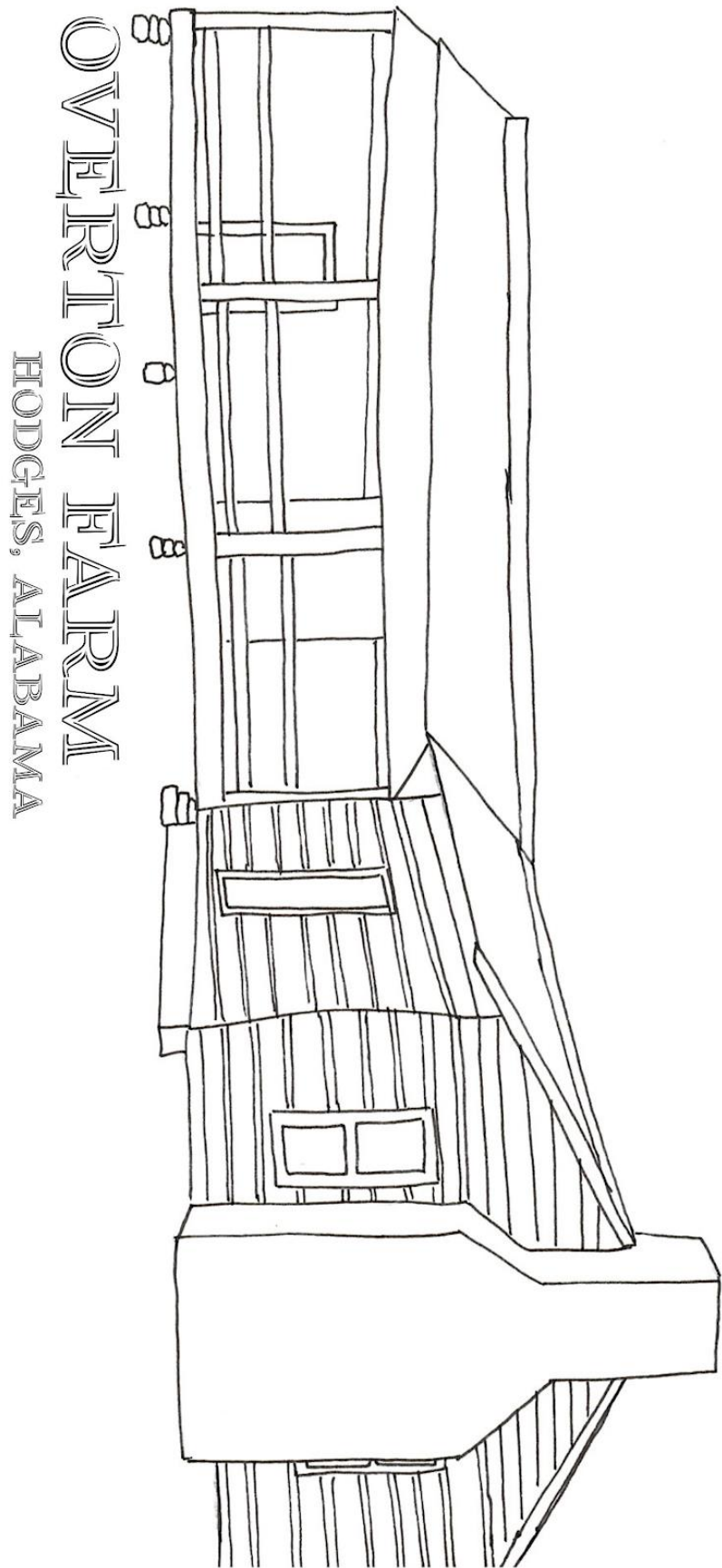
4.4

▪ 4.4.1 Students will:

Relate the relationship of the five geographic regions of Alabama to the movement of Alabama settlers during the early nineteenth century (Geography, History).

▪ 4.4.2 Students will practice:

- Recognizing natural resources of Alabama during the early nineteenth century
- Describing human environments of Alabama as they relate to settlement during the early nineteenth century, including housing, roads, and place names



OVERTON FARM

HODGES, ALABAMA

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