

DRIVING TOUR I

Claiborne—the lost town

From Monroeville-Leave Square on Hwy 47 west, and drive approximately 18 miles to Claiborne.

You will pass through Perdue Hill and you will pass County Road 39 to the right (to Alabama River Pulp Company), continue to the historical marker on your right, “Claiborne,” turn right on the Fort Claiborne Road. You will see the gates to the Old Claiborne Cemetery. Park and walk to the far end of where the oldest graves are. Many of the original residents of Claiborne died of yellow fever, and are buried in this old cemetery.



Early photo of the lost town of Claiborne

Claiborne was first settled in 1816 and quickly became a commercial and political hub of the newly formed Monroe County (at this time, Monroe County was one-third the size of the present state of Alabama). Its importance as a waterway shipping center, as the chief cotton port on the Alabama River, made it a candidate site for the relocation of a state capital there in 1826. Claiborne was the early residence of two of Alabama's early governors. During its heyday, thirteen different newspapers, numerous stores, taverns, and an educational academy operated in the town. In the 1830's, Claiborne boasted a population of over 5,000. Malaria, yellow fever, and the development of the railroad drove its decline, and soon after the turn of the century, the town ceased to exist.

Today, Claiborne is one of the lost towns of Alabama.

Upon leaving Claiborne, turn right on Hwy 84 and cross the Alabama River to go to the Dellet-Bedsole Farm. This historical marker is on the right. Then go on to the Monroe/ Clarke County line and turn around. Cross the river again and then look for the “Fort Claiborne” historical marker on your right. Turn right, go one block, turn right, go to the end of the street. This is the site of the town of

Claiborne, the street scene in the photo. Not one building has survived. Drive back east one mile to the Masonic Hall at Perdue Hill. Perdue Hill is a historic area, with most homes on the highway dating from the late 1800's.

Observe the Historic Marker at the Masonic Hall. The Masonic Hall is the oldest documented public building in the State of Alabama (1823-1825), currently in possession of the Perdue Hill-Claiborne Historic Preservation Foundation, a private group founded for preserving local heritage. The foundation is headed by Agee Stallworth Broughton III, a Mobile attorney and Monroe County landowner.

The Hall originally served as a lodge for the Masonic Order and as the county courthouse. The Marquis de Lafayette



The Masonic Lodge at Perdue Hill was moved from its original site in Claiborne

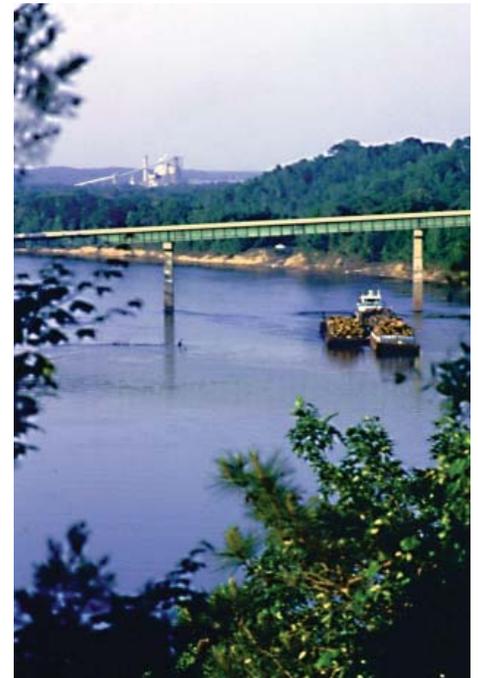
addressed the people of Claiborne and Monroe County here in 1825. Following the decline of Claiborne, the Masons dismantled and rebuilt the hall at its present site in 1884, and continued to meet there until 1919. The building has also been used as a town hall, school and church.

The restored home of William Barrett Travis, a Claiborne legend who left Monroe County to become a hero of the Alamo, was moved



William Barrett Travis Cottage

from Claiborne to this location in the 1970's. There is a historical marker for his house. The house was bought and refurbished by Mr. and Mrs. Palmer Bedsole, who dedicated it to the Perdue Hill-Claiborne Historic Preservation Foundation. The William Barrett Travis Cottage is a quaint, two-room cottage, built in Claiborne circa 1820-1828. While Travis lived in Claiborne he was rumored to become involved in a mysterious affair, which resulted in his moving to Texas in 1831.



Alabama River at Claiborne

When leaving the Masonic Hall, turn right and take Monroe County Highway 1, go 1 mile to McConnico Cemetery on the left. The cemetery is enclosed by a cast iron fence and is one of the oldest in the county. It is maintained by a private foundation. As you face the cemetery, note the fence separating the early (1800's) African-American graves from those of the white population. From McConnico, return to the Masonic Hall.

Just across U. S. Highway 84 from the Masonic Hall, is the restored original post office and store, next to “Top of the Hill Enterprises.” Top of the Hill carries decorator fabrics and accessories, furniture, custom designs, etc., owned by Nancy Burroughs of Perdue Hill. Hours for Top of the Hill are 9am to 5pm Monday through Friday.

The W. E. Broughton Store, (hours 6 am to 5:30 pm Monday – Saturday, closed Sunday)

carries soft drinks and snacks. All information, including open hours and site availability are subject to change. Please call ahead for accurately updated information. Monroe County Museum, (251) 575-7433, or visit MonroeCountyMuseum.org.

For more history on this area, see Monroe County Museum publications Legacy — Claiborne.

