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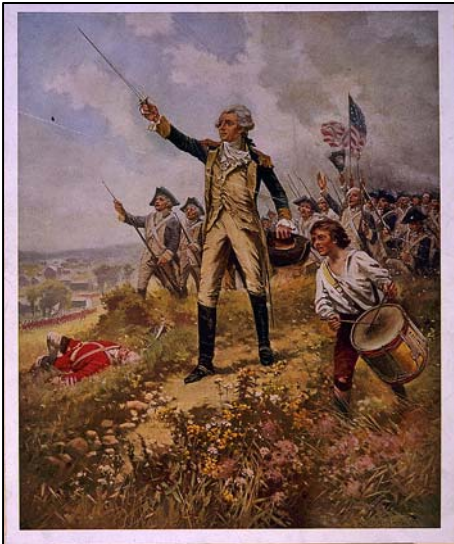
## Before Lafayette Arrived Here

In 1825, the Marquis de Lafayette made a nine-day journey through Alabama. But nothing happens in isolation. The story of this journey is the confluence of three other stories: the story of the Frenchman, the story of the early days of the State of Alabama and its people, and the story about new roads, new means of traveling, and the expansion of the United States. Before beginning the story of his journey through the State, it is necessary to delve into these different stories and to see how they come together at that moment. Then it is needed to connect that moment in the past to today.

### Story 1: A Brief Biography of Lafayette

There are libraries of books written about the Marquis de Lafayette. One cannot do full justice to his life story in just a few pages. But a brief overview is a necessary endeavor in order to understand why his visit was important in the first place.

Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, the future Marquis de Lafayette, was born to the aristocracy in southern France in 1757. He could have been just another nobleman's son but for certain events. For one thing, there was not much parental influence. His father died in a battle against the British when he was only two. From that time until he was eleven, he was brought up apart from his mother; only as a pre-teen did she have him brought to her in Paris, where he was enrolled in a future-Musketeers training program, giving welcome structure to his life. Yet, only two years later, she died, as did his great-grandfather and an uncle, leaving the now-Marquis (he inherited the title from his father) quite wealthy, but an orphan.



A stylized drawing by P. Moran of the young Lafayette in battle. Courtesy the Library of Congress.

The second thing...in his upper teens, with a new wife, Adrienne, and on duty with the Army, Lafayette met other officers who would talk about this new revolt in the Americas, influencing him to have views about liberty for all men. At the same time, he apparently joined the Masons, who had similar views. It didn't hurt his ideas of liberty to also desire to have some revenge on the British for being a fatherless son, or for knocking the British Empire down a peg or two for having defeated France and costing it its North American colonies. With some difficulties—family and royalty were against him and other French officers fighting in the Americas—the young aristocrat managed to sail across the Atlantic, landing in South Carolina in 1777.

The barely-English speaking twenty-year-old shortly thereafter met and bonded with the rebellion leader George Washington. Lafayette's willingness to serve without pay, unlike many other foreign officers, made it possible for him to serve on Washington's staff. His first fighting took place in a retreat from the battle at Brandywine, in Pennsylvania. Despite taking a leg wound, he took command and kept the retreat from becoming a rout, endearing him to the men and his superior officers. Soon given

command of troops, he fought in other campaigns in New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island, and shared the hardships of Valley Forge. He treated his men well and respectfully and shared both the fighting and the privations.

Those aspects and exploits soon made him a popular hero, in the United States and in France. On a brief return to his homeland in 1779-80, Lafayette was charged with helping the American envoys in creating the needed alliance of the French military onto the side of the Americans. Successful, Lafayette then returned to the battles still taking place in the United States. Now a General, Lafayette patrolled in New York and New Jersey, and tried to turn the reluctant French naval forces into a cooperative partner. In 1781, he was sent south, becoming part of the forces that trapped General Cornwallis, taking an important redoubt—an earthen, outer defensive fort—at Yorktown that led to the final defeat of the British army.

Over the next few years, the French hero helped with treaty and trade negotiations between two nations, and even worked on the earliest efforts to end the slave trade and foster better relations with some tribes of Indians. His Paris home was a popular hangout for Americans. But other than one voyage to the now-independent States, he remained in France, starting on a career that he hoped would change France into a democracy as well.

In the late 1780s, Lafayette became part of the French Revolution, as part of the earliest attempts at an Assembly for the people, yet also as a part of the Royal Guard. He was striving to stay in the middle between the royalty, whom he wanted to keep but shed of their powers much like today's British royalty, and the everyday citizens of France. It was a fine line, and Lafayette couldn't balance on it. Over time, due to various actions, his popularity waned as both sides felt he was a player for the other side. In 1791, after Dragoons of which he was in charge fired into a crowd, his reputation fell into tatters. Lafayette tried to flee in 1792, but was captured and held in prisons in Belgium, Luxembourg, Poland, Prussia, and what today is the Czech Republic. He remained a prisoner through 1797—his wife and daughters joining him in 1795—when a treaty between the Habsburgs and Napoleon, finally freed him. By 1799 Napoleon allowed him to be repatriated, initially without French citizenship or most of his properties. He was impoverished, other than some support from Americans, and he was free only as long as he promised to stay out of politics, since he refused to support Napoleon.

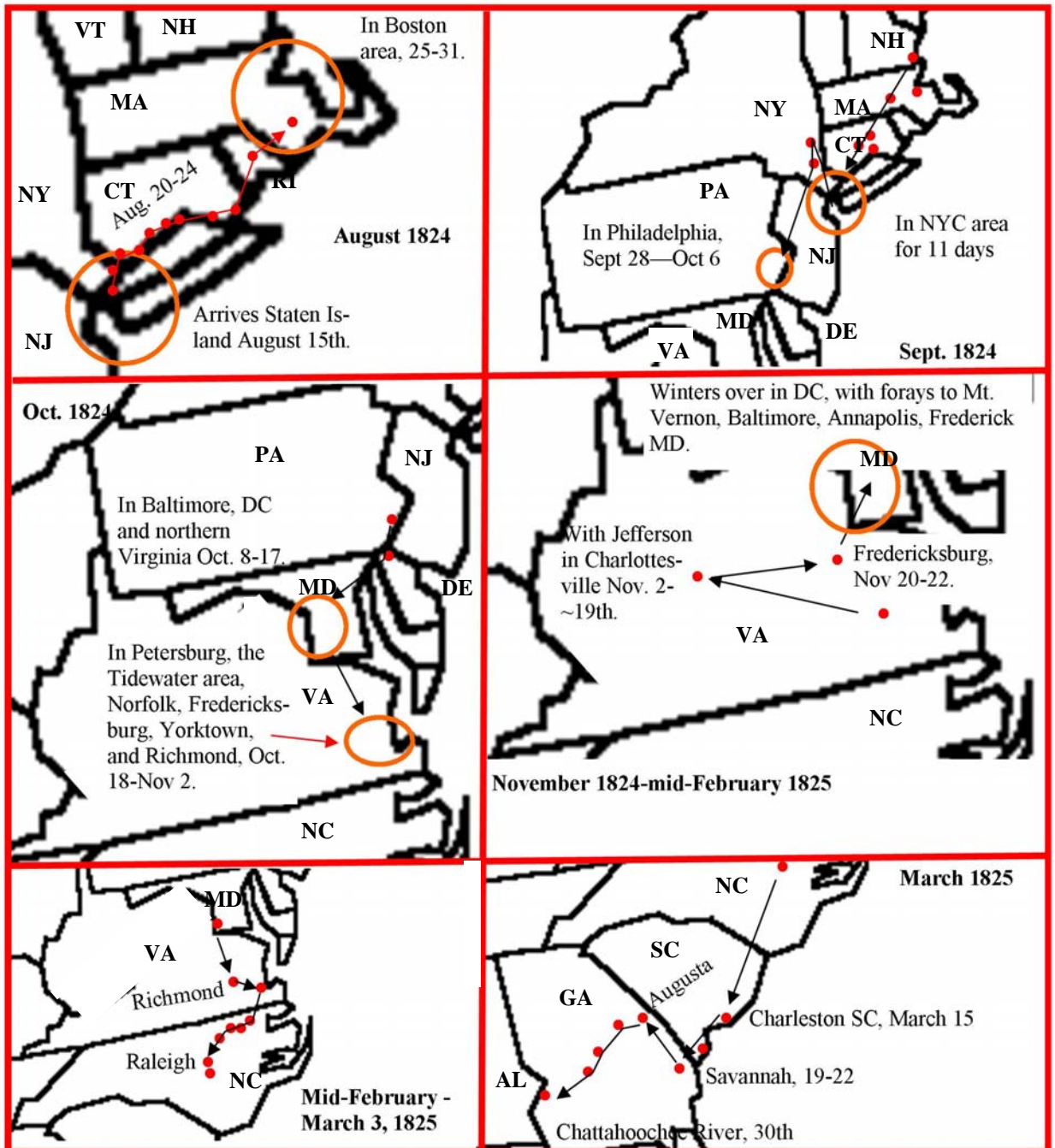
Lafayette refused all honors and appointments by Napoleon. He made a few speeches, and his home was often visited by Americans and others who sought democracy in France and elsewhere. In 1807, his loyal wife Adrienne grew ill and died.

Napoleon lost his empire to Britain and its allies in 1814. Except for a brief Napoleonic restoration, a royal dynasty of Napoleonic emperors, the Bourbons, came to rule France once the victorious allies left France. Although Lafayette was elected to the Chamber of Representatives, then to the Chamber of Deputies, his dislike of the new royalty restored much of his reputation as a champion of liberty and an antagonist to the loyalists. That dislike involved him peripherally with various conspiracies and plots, though never enough to imprison him.

He lost his seat in the Chamber of Deputies in 1823. As a matter of great timing, at that same moment, Lafayette was invited by President James Monroe to come to America on a grand tour, to help celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolutionary War. Monroe also wanted Lafayette to visit because Lafayette was the last surviving Major General, and because it would help to remind the growing nation of its past and bind all the new states to the old ones. Despite opposition to his traveling by the Bourbons, the now 67-year-old once again managed to leave France for the United States.

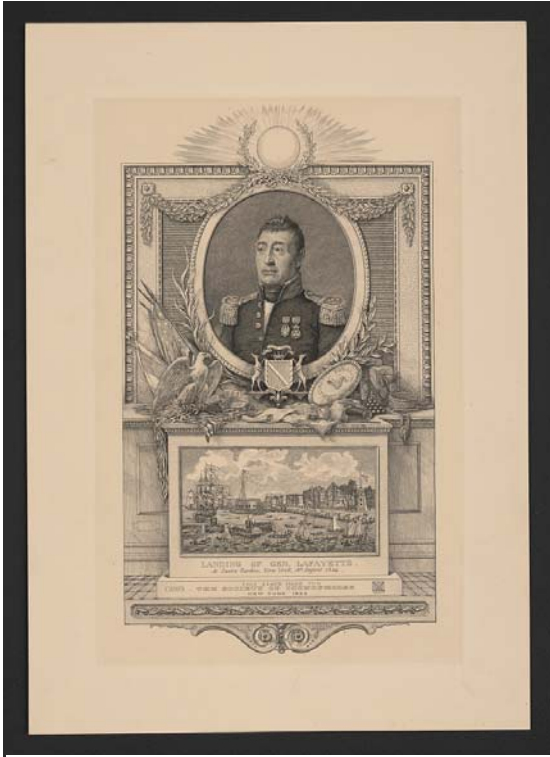
Lafayette arrived in New York in August of 1824, and all of that year and the first three

months of the next were engaged in events in the original 13 states, mostly from Virginia to Massachusetts. With him was his oldest son George Washington Lafayette (sometimes written as Georges), and his secretary/manservant Auguste Levasseur, who would record the trip in a diary. While ‘wintering over’ in Washington City (today’s District of Columbia), he received an invitation from Alabama’s governor Israel Pickens to visit the six-year-old state. Lafayette eagerly accepted, and spent the winter planning both his expected plans of travel south of Virginia, and now an unexpected chance to go west of the Appalachians for the first time in his life.



Lafayette's Grand Tour, prior to arrival in Alabama, 1824-5.

Before Lafayette Arrived Here



Lafayette as he arrived in New York harbor in 1824. Courtesy, Library of Congress.

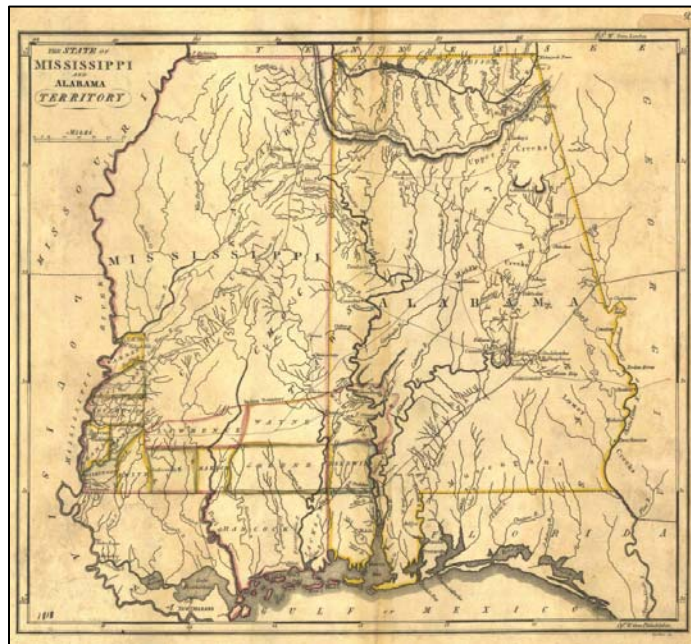
On the night of March 30th, he would have been encamped in a bark-covered hut, about a mile east of the Chattahoochee River on what is now Fort Benning, Georgia.

## Story 2: Alabama, from Creek and Georgian Territory to Statehood

Alabama, originally belonging to Georgia, became part of the Mississippi Territory, the “Old Southwest,” because all states were required to give up their old pre-independence holdings west of the Appalachian Mountains to the Federal government. Not all of Alabama had belonged to Georgia, though. The southern part along the Gulf Coast, including the second biggest Gulf Coast city, Mobile, started out in 1702 as French. It was lost to the British when France lost its colonies in 1763. The Brits, in turn, lost that area to the Spanish in 1780 by conquest and in 1783 as part of the treaty that formally set free the Colonies. But the Spanish claimed a boundary between the U.S. and its West Florida colony so far north that today’s Phenix City was on the borderline, and virtu-

ally all of the territory that Lafayette would one day traverse would have been Spanish territory, including Montgomery. After about ten years of haggling and threats of war, Spain finally agreed to a border that matches today’s Alabama-Florida line, but continued at first all the way to the Mississippi River. That would change in 1813 when an American force captured Mobile (without a shot) and, briefly, Pensacola, and turned all the Gulf coastline from today’s Florida to the Mississippi River into American territory.

But Spain wasn’t the only nation involved in what became the Alabama Territory after the western half became the state of Mississippi. The Creek Indians (also known as the Muscogees) had their Nation on the east side of the Territory. By treaty with the new neighbor, the United States, Creeks owned the land as far east as the Ocmulgee River near Macon, Georgia, most of the west side of that state, and



The Mississippi/Alabama Territories, courtesy ADAH.

Before Lafayette Arrived Here

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much of Alabama east of today's Montgomery and from almost the Gulf Coast northwards to around Anniston. Over time that area would be diminished by other treaties, war losses, and just plain theft. The long-time American Indian Agent Col. Benjamin Hawkins was one of the rare officers who treated the Creeks honestly, and they respected him, but even he could not stop the relentless hunger for land by white settlers. The Creek Nation did take its territorial integrity seriously, even if the American nation did not, and traveling through or settling within the Nation, without sponsorship of another Creek or marriage to a Creek woman, was a definite danger, and an effective block to settlers.

That Creek nation was shrunk following the Creek War of 1813-14, which was an outgrowth of the continual battle between Indians and White settlers ignoring treaties. The War began after a massacre at Fort Mims in south central Alabama of hundreds of White men, women and children by the Red Sticks faction of the Creeks. After losing to General Andrew Jackson at the battle of Horseshoe Bend, most of the Creek Nation in Georgia evaporated and some of the Nation in Alabama as well. It didn't matter to anti-Indian Jackson that some of the land was ceded by Creek and Cherokee allies, which didn't help create any future peace.

Alabama became a territory of its own in 1817, and then a state in late 1819. In that year also was born the river port city Montgomery, though that began a little earlier as two rival cities, East Alabama Town, and New Philadelphia (and Alabama Town, a year even earlier but two miles downriver—it didn't last). The state capital moved from St. Stephens to Huntsville, briefly, then to the first official capital, Cahawba.

### Story 3: The Federal Road and the Alabama Steamboats

Alabama was just a backwater, not even a territory by name, when 1803 dawned. That was the year that the size of the U.S. doubled with the purchase by President Thomas Jefferson of the Louisiana Territory, and its major port city New Orleans. For Washington, the nation's capital, to communicate by mail with officials in New Orleans required major time commitments by sea vessels, which also had to navigate between the Spanish territories of East and West Florida, and Cuba. Alternatively, mail could go via horse over the mountains of Kentucky or Tennessee to the Natchez Trace, a trail from Nashville to Natchez, Mississippi, and then by boat or further horsemen down the Mississippi River. It would take weeks to send mail and then get a response back. A faster route was desired. An experimental trip on an extant Indian trail from the East Coast demonstrated that a real postal road that way would cut significant time from mail delivery. But such a route had to go through both Creek and Spanish lands, neither of which were safe, nor considered desirable by those governments.

Nevertheless, an 1806 treaty with the Creeks was successfully negotiated to allow the United States to build such a postal road, from Georgia through Alabama, to the territorial capital of St. Stephens. From there, with reluctant Spanish permission, riders took other trails to New Orleans.

This was the start of the Federal Road, essentially one of the, if not *the*, first government-sponsored and paid-for interstate routes. By "road" it is not meant to mean any kind of paved thoroughfare. This was a path through woods and fields at first no wider than could accommodate a couple of horses side by side. It followed ridges as much as possible, and over logs with packed earth bridging swamps and creeks.

The first Alabama section went through the Creek Nation. The Creeks even complied with their part of the treaty, building "places of entertainment" under Indian control which



became the various stands, taverns and inns for travelers, but most would not rate a one-star rating today. The remaining sections of the not-yet-named Federal Road, which turned to the southwest before it reached Montgomery, were not any less dangerous. Both nefarious Indian and Whites made the road no walk in the park.

Unlike today's interstate highways, this 'interstate' was not laid down permanently in place. It tended to wander, creating various, sometimes simultaneous, sometimes crisscrossing, paths that would make a real map of it look like lines of overlapping soft noodles. Flooding, fallen trees and other reasons caused its path to change, sometimes in just small inconsequential parts, sometimes with large changes. Additionally, for quite some time, maps of the Road was often just words, and the few real maps were made schematically, without surveys, from hearsay and travelers' tales.

By 1811, when the ongoing frictions between some Creeks and the increasingly more numerous white settlers who took advantage of the route to emigrate to other parts of the Old Southwest became too unbearable for the Creeks, the postal Road became a military Road, made wider to accommodate marching troops and wagons, and with the beginnings of forts and depots, largely without Creek approval. Mostly, the troops were militias from neighboring states, primarily Georgia. Thus were born Forts Mitchell, Bainbridge, Sand Fort, and Hull. The open warfare that started with the massacre at Fort Mims (at least according to the states, not the Creeks) ended with the 1814 Battle of Horse-shoe Bend, and the treaty dictated by Andrew Jackson would cause much of the Creek land to become ceded to the States. Only the area in east central Alabama that Lafayette would one-day travel remained Creek, though just barely.

Though more settlers than ever passed through Creek lands to head to Alabama, Mississippi, and the Louisiana Territory, the peace was uneasy, even up to the time of Lafayette's visit. Some Creeks did try to accommodate to Western, i.e. American European, ways. Ultimately even that would not do any good for them.

The Road changed irrevocably when, in 1821, the first steamboat, the *Harriott*, made its way up the Alabama River to two-year-old Montgomery, showing that cargo—cotton, slaves, imported products, food stuffs and supplies—and passengers could now get from, and to, Mobile much faster than before, or via the rest of the Federal Road. This made Montgomery no longer a backwater but a true center of commerce for central and eastern Alabama. Federal Road traffic would start to decline heading towards the south, but pick up by the hundreds or thousands heading to Montgomery, turning the woods and horse road into a stage route and adding a branch route from Waugh and Mt. Meigs to the steamboat city.

Many of the Federal Road travelers stayed, becoming the ancestors of large numbers of today's Alabamians. Despite the thousands who took the trek, a rate that peaked in the 1820s, the most famous traveler on the Road would be the Marquis...and the most famous to take a steamboat ride downriver in state history.

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## Tying the Stories Together, 1825 + Today

In 1824, these stories come together. Lafayette is in hero heaven, away from the intrigues of France. He had received an invitation to cross the mountains to a new, not-original-13 state on the other side of the Appalachians, and this opens the door to him seeing the vast interior of the new nation, places he had not ever imagined visiting. It would send him touring out of the 'civilized' areas of the country, to the lands of the Indians, to the mighty Mississippi River, and the new younger 'sisters' states of the United States. A road to get there was now well established, and some new-tech, boats powered neither by wind nor man, were his to use. The stories come together. Lafayette's only constraint was that he had made a commitment to be at Bunker Hill in Massachusetts in June for its monument dedication. Could he swing this long trip and still make the dedication?

To tie this moment, the next nine days of Lafayette's life, with today, two hundred years later, it is necessary to ask, and answer, the following questions:

**If Lafayette were to do the journey today, where would he go?**

**How would he get there?**

**What would he see today?**

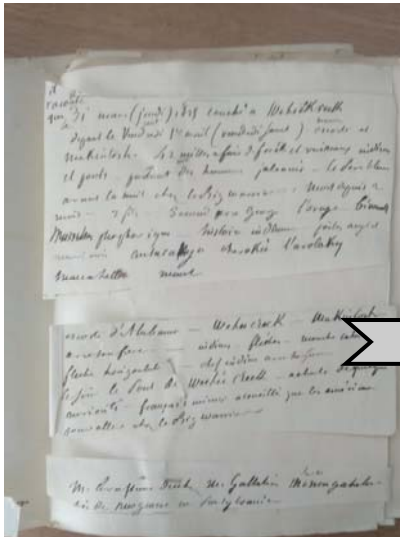
**What would be different? What would be the same?**

**And how would we follow along?**

Our constraint is how to get enough information after two centuries to know where he went and how he got there. Up north his visits were well documented. But out west (of the Appalachians), the population was smaller, there were fewer newspapers and writers, and the states and most cities were far less developed. Today there are only four sources of first-hand information on his visit to Alabama.

The first primary—indeed, *very* primary—resource material comes from Lafayette's secretary and manservant Auguste Levasseur, who did a daily diary, often filled with fascinating details but not always inclusive of accurate location information. Addresses (speeches) mattered more than addresses (locations). This author is grateful to have received photographic copies, and typed versions of same, of Levasseur's original notes in French for the Alabama section of his book. His book, in both French and English, made from his notes, is available online even in as far back a form as the 1829 version.

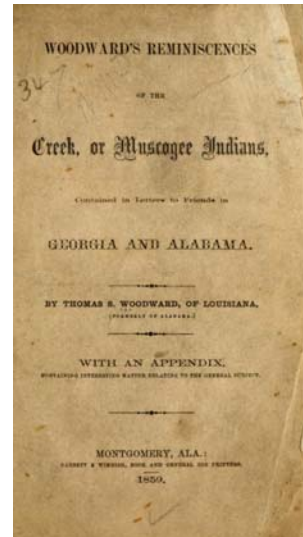
The second source comes from noted early Alabama military general, and character/story teller, Thomas Woodward, who escorted Lafayette from the Chattahoochee River to Cahawba. His book of reminiscences gives key insights about people and places in early Alabama history. The third report we can use is by Governor Israel Pickens, who escorted Lafayette from Montgomery to Mobile Point (in fact, it is his letter to a brother-in-law mentioning that last place that even tells us he went there!). Finally, some articles were written in the newspaper, the *Cahawba Press*. Difficult to come by, they are sometimes quoted in secondary sources, such as a 1940-era recap of Lafayette's visit by Edgar Brannon. No other newspapers with



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aux la civilisation ne s'est point souillée de crimes comme celle de la Grande-Bretagne dans les Indes-Orientales; mais, tout en leur rendant cette justice, on ne peut s'empêcher de prendre intérêt au sort des Indiens expropriés. Ainsi, en rencontrant à chaque pas la case d'écorce du chasseur muscogule encore habitée par la sécurité et les simples vertus de l'ignorance, nous n'avons pu songer, sans tristesse, que bientôt elle serait renversée et remplacée par la ferme du cultivateur américain.

Ce fut sur les bords de la rivière Chatahouchee que nous vîmes pour la première fois les Indiens réunis en troupe pour recevoir le général. Grand nombre de femmes et de jeunes garçons se tenaient le feuillage sur la rive opposée, et nous apercevant, des cris en signe de joie. Des guerriers descendaient la pente d'une colline peu éloignée, et accouraient au point du rivage où devait toucher un bac sur lequel nous étions descendus. La variété et la singulière richesse de leurs costumes offraient le coup d'œil le plus pittoresque. M. Georges Lafayette sauta le premier à terre, et en un moment fut entouré d'hommes, de femmes, d'enfants qui s'agitaient, sautaient, dansaient autour de lui, touchaient ses mains, ses habits avec un

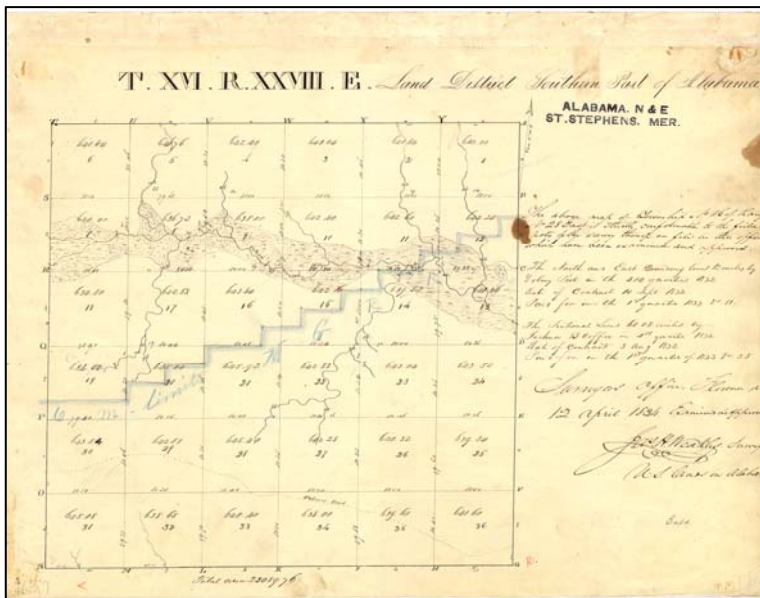


Two original sources of first-hand information: Left, Auguste Levasseur's original hand-written notes (Courtesy, the Lafayette Fondation Chambrun); Center, a scan of a page from Levasseur's book of 1829; Right, a scan of the cover of General Thomas Woodward's 1859 book, a chapter of which is on Lafayette in Alabama.

first-hand accounts are extant in other Alabama cities.

There are some valuable secondary sources that are accurate for some purposes. These include the outstanding, well-researched work of Peter Brannon, a one-time director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History a century ago who published numerous articles in newspapers and newsletters. Other articles in late 1800's *Montgomery Advertiser* issues were of great help to locating places in Montgomery visited by Lafayette, and Peter Hamilton's book, *Colonial Mobile*, did the same for that city.

For other materials found useful, see the Selected Sources section of this book.



One section of Jason Weakley's work on the Federal Road.

As for determining Lafayette's route...that's much more challenging. Early Federal Road maps were few, and almost all done from hearsay and travelers' tales, with little surveying. They are more anecdotal than accurate in depth, though that doesn't make them completely useless. The first surveyor of the Federal Road did so years after it was built. Thomas Freeman surveyed all of Alabama with his teams and accurately plotted the Road and some nearby features and existing stands and sites in 1818-1819. But even he had to stop short of a complete map because the Creek

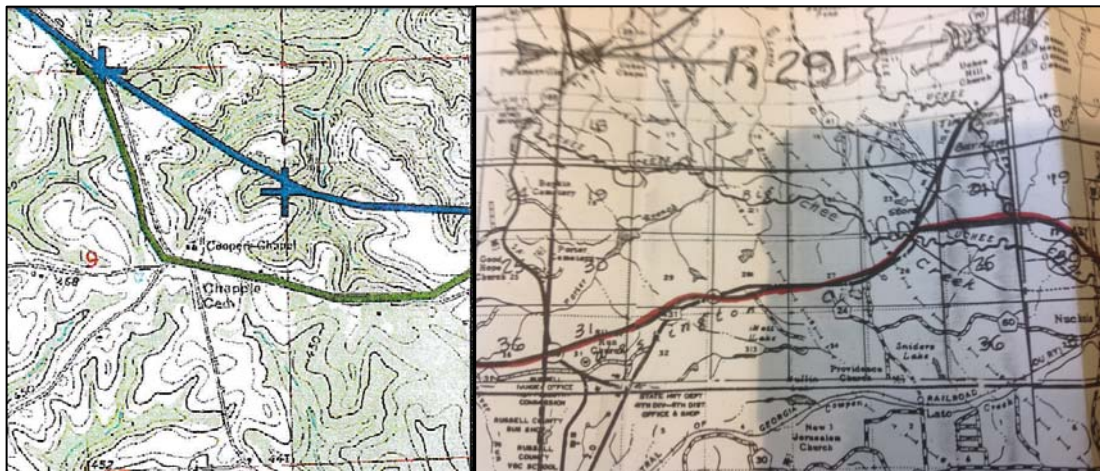
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Indians would not permit him to survey all the townships /ranges/ squares in their Nation. That would not be done until 1832 by Jason Weakley, just before the Creeks would be removed from the territory for good. Much later, in the 1940s, when much of eastern Alabama was still nearly as agrarian and wooded as in Lafayette's time, surveyor Fletcher Hale would re-do the maps using both field exploration and that newly available resource, post-World War II aerial photography. It would reveal other major branches of the Federal Road, though how used most of them were is debatable.

Other maps—listed in the Selected Sources section in more detail--would be made for the late 1980s book on the Federal Road by Henry de Leon Southerland Jr., and J. Elijah Brown. This book is well researched and entertainingly readable on the history of the Road, but its maps are very general, and in at least one case, with a significant error. A wonderfully written, with generalized maps, historical report was produced for ALDOT (Alabama Department of Transportation) by Christopher and Waselkov that expounds on the history of the Road in a most entertaining style. This colloquially named "ALDOT Survey" does indicate major known sections of surviving Road, but some information is hidden in redactions and the work was never published into popular press. It can be obtained from certain purveyors of academic works such as Academia.edu or Researchgate.net.

Two more maps came to the author's attention. First, author unknown but from a collection of Old Federal Road Society papers, a mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century map of Russell County highways and county routes with a red line showing someone's early attempts at tracing remnants on the modern landscape. The other is a mapping of both Hale and original (labeled erroneously as Freeman) routings of the Road on a modern topographical map. This one is outstanding in its accurate portrayal of the Federal Road in Macon and eastern Montgomery Counties. The author wishes to remain anonymous.



Useful maps made by unknown surveyors in modern times. Russell County (right) found in the ADAH, Macon County (left) in author's possession.

While much information was obtained from these sources mentioned (and others not mentioned here), some also came from individuals, often property owners, for which thanks is gratefully given. Finally, site examinations, often multiple times, were done over the 2018-19 time-frame to pin down both Old Federal Road and historical site locations, which were then photographed for the future record. 🚗

## Let's Go! But Wait...Before You Go...

The goal is to follow Lafayette and his party across Alabama as closely as possible to his actual route to answer the questions posed earlier. For points east of Montgomery, that means trying to follow the Federal Road, and sometimes our road to travel *is* the Federal Road path—modernized—or it is off to the side close by. Part of the historical fun here is to see these 200-year-old Road fragments. But sometimes it is not possible to follow the Road because it may no longer exist, or it may be on private property and inaccessible. From Montgomery to Mobile Point the route was nearly totally by riverboat down the Alabama River for him; today one must try to follow along in cars via U.S., State or County Routes as close to the River as conveniently possible. In both cases, the modern traveler will have to take a variety of detours.

Obviously, this is an auto tour. In fact, the roads in Russell and Macon County are of-



A typical Federal Road road—dirt. Still.

ten true rural roads, on dirt, even grass. Cell phone reception is weak and sporadic at best. If you need to download a map to work with your GPS through the cell network, you probably won't be able to do so there. Be sure someone knows your route because calling for a tow for a flat tire may not be possible. In terms of speed and stops for food and sleep, you will be going faster than his horse-drawn carriage, but today there are considerable miles with no gas stations, no eateries, and no grocery stores for supplies. No Lafayette inns survive along the route, nor modern ones will be found. Bring your own food and drink and have a full tank of gas when you start.


There are areas where a bike might be serviceable, but for much of the tour from the Chattahoochee River to the Alabama River this is not bike-able. The dirt, gravel or grass roads are sometimes not very wide, frequently rough to ride on, by car or bike, with no bike lanes, sidewalks or ample right of ways. Sometimes these are true highways, paved and with vehicles traveling at high speeds. It just cannot be recommended that this be tried as a bicycle tour. To do so is risky, not recommended, and is at the reader's risk.


Much of the above holds true also for the part of the tour that parallels the Alabama River. Between Selma and Mobile, traveler's services are only rarely on the route, though this guide will point out places off the trail for hotels, gas, and food.


Similarly, hiking is only viable in small doses, and walking tours are really only good in six places--Fort Mitchell, Montgomery, Old Cahawba, Perdue Hill, Mobile city, and Mobile Point.


Many of the locations of where Lafayette stopped are on private property. On a tour like this, there are many things visible if you stop and look them over from the road, a sidewalk, or the public right of way of the road. Rights of way can range from just a few feet on either side of the actual road to as much as 20-30 feet. Enjoy the views but stay off the private property beyond the right of way border. Often the right of way is pretty obvious, by the shoulders of the roads and the lines of fencing. Respect them.

Most maps provided in this book are based on Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) county highway maps, and used with their kind permission. The symbols include:

 A numbered or lettered red (or, rarely, blue) star is a point mentioned on the map, standing for a turn, a location of a historical feature, a mile-point. They are labeled on each route in alphabetical order. In the text this is written as “asterisk B” (\*B).

 On occasions when the tour points are close together, the letter for the star may be found nearby in a red-bordered circle.

 A numbered Fleur de Lis in a circle stands for a location of a particular Lafayette-related site, such as a place he slept at, talked at, watched something, or even rode on, or a key interesting point he passed by of historical importance. They are numbered in order of occurrence.

 Those that are completely inaccessible for the public are generally not numbered; they are, however, indicated with an open asterisk symbol.

• Other sites of either geographical, descriptive or non-Lafayette historical interest are marked with a red dot.

Mileage amounts should be taken with an accuracy value of +/- 0.1 mile. The flip of an odometer digit really signifies a zone, not an exact point. So a distance measure of 3.4 miles could encompass a location being at the start of the zone after 3.3 miles, or within feet of a zone beginning at 3.5 miles. Five hundred feet can be a considerable distance to seek a site within. In fact, as modern measurers know, it can be plus or minus that tenth of a mile on both ends of the zone, or 0.2 miles something can be off. Look not for the exact moment your odometer flips to a particular amount; the site one seeks may be likely not *at* that point, but certainly *near* it.

All the grid squares on the ALDOT-based maps are one mile on a side. On most other maps, a map scale is indicated. Scales on any one map are not the necessarily the same on another map. In city areas, these are usually eliminated since we are concerned mostly with very walk-able blocks.

..... A dotted red line on the map is the *approximate* route of the Federal Road.

— A solid red line indicates a visible section of the original path of the Federal Road. Green lines are the paths of Hale strands, discovered by aerial photography in the 1940s, of the Federal Road. For the most part, those are just of side interest; Lafayette seemed to have taken strictly the original path of the Federal Road. There is only one place where an alternative pathway is discussed. Finally, the Montgomery Branch is indicated in blue.

Other symbols as needed are explained on each map’s legend area beneath the chart.

The notation **RN** in the text (and once, in a map) refers to the more extensive discussion of the point, or the particular site, in question to be found in the Research Notes section of this work. There, for things that may not be obvious or clearly mentioned in the sources, a more extensive analysis of the source materials or our field research, and arguments on the research for those more interested in how decisions were determined... for something...is given.

The term "Federal Road" is used to refer to the highway as it was 200 years, and as a generality. We use "Old Federal Road" to refer to fragments seen today.

Almost all photos were taken by and copyrighted to the author; those from other persons or sources are noted in the photo's caption, and are used with the person or institution's permission. We will often use the abbreviations ADAH and ALDOT for the Alabama Department of Archives and History, and Alabama Department of Transportation, respectively.

Finally, the text here is entirely the responsibility of the author. 🚗

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*Now let's go!*—from where Lafayette began his morning before entering the state of Alabama.....



The Chattahoochee River and Alabama shore, from the Georgia side, as Lafayette would see today, probably little different than in 1825.

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## Day 1—The Landing, to Crabtree's

March 31, 1825: Headlines

The Travel-Delayed Lafayette Enters Alabama.

Meets Both Georgia Officials and Indian Leaders at Fort Mitchell.

First Time Seeing Indians en Masse, Enjoys a Ball Game.

After Dining with Fort Commander, Begins Travel on Federal Road to Crabtree's Tavern and an Indian Village.

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Every journey needs a starting point. Without an amphibious vehicle that can travel on the Chattahoochee River, this journey's starting point must be on land. A prominent place would be where two busy highways intersect, and for that the choice is where US-80, which ultimately connects Montgomery, AL and Phenix City, AL/Columbus, GA, intersects highways US-431 and US-280. There are two of these intersections; the start will be the southern one, where US-80 directly heads west of the combined highways towards Montgomery and Tuskegee. The other intersection is 0.7 miles north of it, and heads northeasterly towards Georgia. The southern intersection currently has a Walgreen's Pharmacy and a car wash on two of its corners. **Refer to Map #1 for reference.**

**\*START** From US-80, take temporarily-merged US-280/431 southward for 1.7 miles, where the highways separate.

**\*A** At the highway split, take US-431 south from here.

**\*B** Some 3.0 miles south on this busy highway, make a LEFT exit (with a exit warning sign just a bit in advance and with a gas station on the far left corner of the highway intersection), onto AL-165, when the traffic light allows.

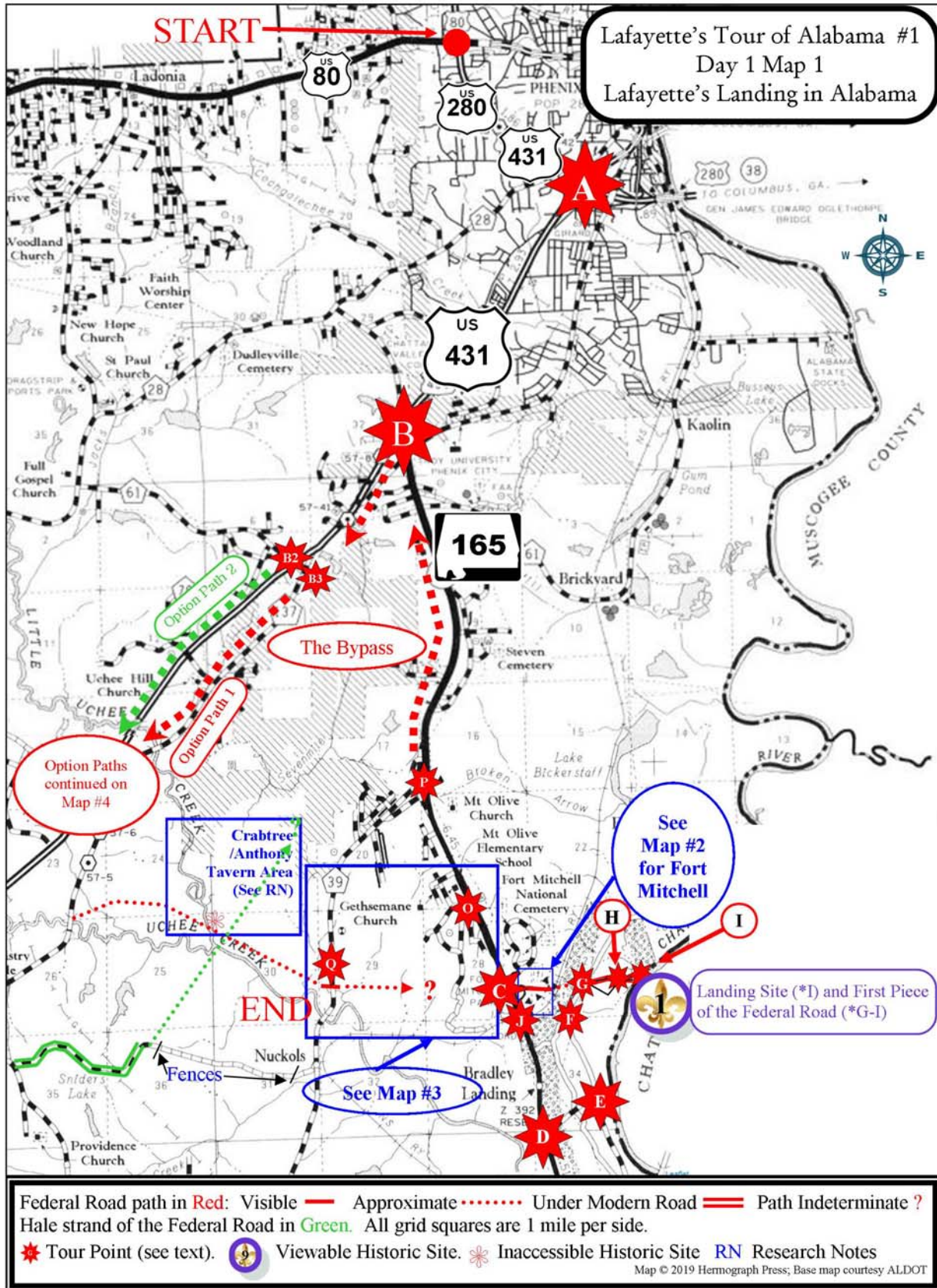
**\*C** Some 5.5 miles later passes Fort Mitchell, the park with a re-created 1813 fort, to which we will return later on.

**\*D** Continue 1.3 miles beyond the Fort, turning left onto 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Road, on the left where signs point to an entrance to Fort Benning.

### The Landing Spot

The land around us is part of Fort Benning, but the actual Post is a closed base on the other side of the Chattahoochee River, in Georgia; you must have a pass or an escort to get

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Day 1—The Landing, to Crabtree's

onto the actual base, but we are not going that far. This section of the Fort Reservation is a buffer zone and occasional hunting or training area. Tanks have been known to prowl around the unpaved roads in the past.

**\*E Go 0.6 miles from AL-165, and prepare to turn left at the second unpaved road on the left.**

The paved 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Road that you are on makes a 90-degree right turn at this point, heading towards the security entrance gate at the River; don't go that way! Instead, turn left onto the unpaved road. Drive this road slowly because of its gravelly roadbed.

**\*F There will be a road coming from the left in 0.8 miles and your road angles to the right.**

**\*G At 0.3 miles further on, two roads come from the right, forming a three-points intersection. Turn right here onto the leftmost of the two.**

**\*H With 0.4 more miles of driving, just before you get to the River, there is a fork created by a road coming from the right--in fact, it is the end of the road you didn't take at the three-points intersection--but bear left at this fork; the River is downhill just 0.1 miles ahead. We designate this last point as \*I.**



A view of Lafayette's landing site in Alabama (foreground), looking across the Chattahoochee River towards the place where he left Georgia.

This place where the road meets the river is where **Lafayette and his carriages were brought to shore** by the Creek Indians, whose land this was originally, and this last section of road you traveled is an original, though well worn by modern vehicles, part of the Federal Road. Some more recent accounts state you could see ruts here where the many 19<sup>th</sup> century settler wagons traversed the Federal Road; none were seen in this spot, and any such ruts were more likely made by tanks and other treaded Army vehicles.

Both Levasseur and Woodward say that Lafayette was met on the Georgia side by English-speaking and lived-in-the-Eastern states Chilly McIntosh (sometimes spelled Chilli, Chily,



and other variants), son of a major Creek chief, and a band of 50 Creek Indians. The Lafayette party and their horses, carriages and supplies were ferried over the river. Lafayette's son George Washington Lafayette disembarked first and was surrounded by natives, eager to see and touch him. But Lafayette himself was not allowed to leave the ferry; instead, Indians picked him up, sitting in his carriage called a cabriolet—a carriage with a top that could be drawn down, a term still used today for some convertibles!—and carried him off the ferry, onto the shore, and inland. The Creek Indians liked and respected Lafayette; his reputation for respecting Indians that fought or dealt with him had preceded him. Also, he had fought against the British which most of the Creeks appreciated as they had been ill-treated by the British (although some did fight with the British). So out of respect, they felt that Lafayette should not touch wet soil.

This was Lafayette's first meeting with Indians in a large group, as over 200 Indians awaited him on the west bank. While relations between the Indians and the white settlers were never always peaceful, this was a rare occasion of accord between whites and natives. At this time the land between Macon, GA and most of the way to Montgomery was still Creek territory, by treaty, so the Alabama government respected Indian rights and made the arrangement for Lafayette to be met here first by the Creek leaders and tribesmen, and brought to the white Alabama delegation inland.

Standing at the shore you can see an identical looking area across the River where Lafayette and his carriages and party were picked up by the Indians. Behind the pick-up spot's shielding trees is an airfield where planes frequently land and take off, often for parachutist training. Today, the Alabama landing place is a favorite spot for fishing, almost always by former or current base workers or ex-soldiers who still live in the area. Here one can definitely say "Lafayette, he was here", and you are standing for sure where he stood.

## To Fort Mitchell

**\*I Turn your car around and head back to main unpaved road (0.5 total miles).**

**\*G At the intersection of the three roads again, before turning left, stop a moment and take a look straight ahead.**

Through that vegetative jungle ahead of you once went the Federal Road, up that steep hill. Before Fort Benning was such a big, closed complex, a path was evident on the hill, aged local residents say. Nothing can be seen today and the area is impassable. Out of view behind the hilltop is a railroad line and the Fort Benning Military Reservation boundary, and then Fort Mitchell. Levasseur reported that they pulled Lafayette's cabriolet up that hill in short, halting steps, with an Indian escort totaling about 50 warriors. The steepness is hard enough but I'm not sure Lafayette and the Creeks would care to tackle that jungle of brush and plants today.

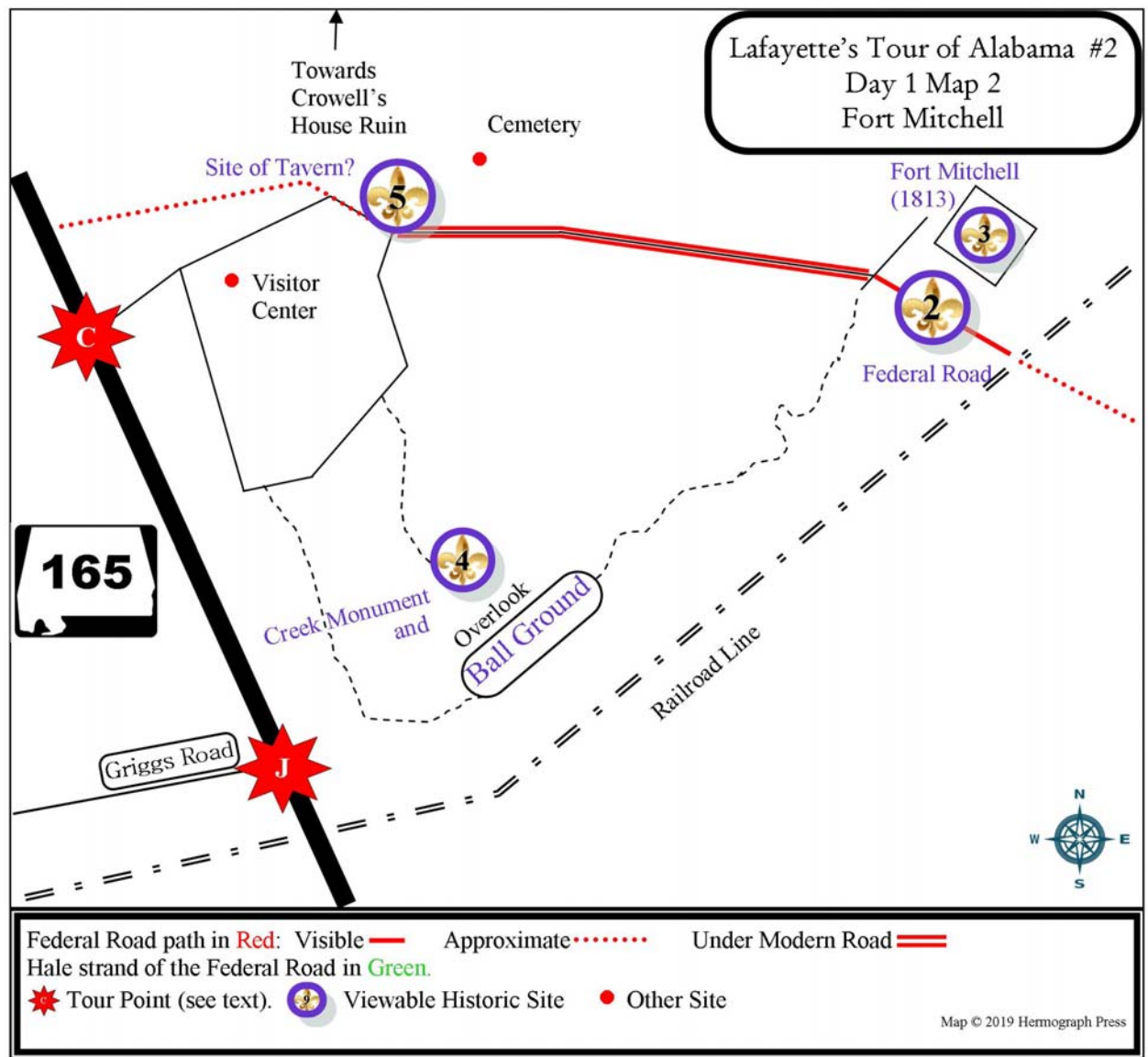
It is necessary for us to go 'round and head back towards Fort Mitchell another way.

**\*G Continue the left turn at this intersection to retrace the way back to Fort Benning's entrance road (\*E, 1.1 miles); turn right there and return to AL-165 (~0.5 miles) where you turn right again (\*D).**

**\*C At 1.3 miles north, there are two entrances on the right. The first one leads to both the Fort Mitchell Park Visitors Center (a.k.a. Fort Mitchell Histori-**



cal Park and Museum) and the Chattahoochee Indian Heritage Center, also listed on some maps as the Creek Trail of Tears Monument. Turn right into this Park. The second entrance is Fort Mitchell National Cemetery, a modern military burial ground. We will come to that later.



### At Fort Mitchell

**Fort Mitchell Park** is a rectangular plot of land, with some authentic to the *time*, but not original, artifacts. **[Map #2]** The 0.3-mile-long entrance roadway acts as a spine from which sites and side routes are found or connected, on the left or right. At the entranceway on the left is a cabin from the time period of the early 1800s. On the right is the visitor center. Here is

where you pay admission fees, and can view a nice film in an auditorium and better than average displays.

Driving slightly uphill, the roadway bears first to the right. An intersection there on the right goes to the Chattahoochee Indian Heritage Center, and Creek Trail of Tears Monument. A short distance onwards on the left will be found one of two cemeteries onsite, then some buildings used for Park programs. Crossing a little bridge leads you to a T-intersection at the end of the roadway, only 0.3 miles from the entrance. The left fork of the "T" leads to the re-created 1813 Fort Mitchell.

The pavement driven to this T-intersection is actually on the **Old Federal Road**. If the pavement were to continue straight, it would go over a real fragment of the 1800's road in the woods ahead. (See photo to the right.) The fragment, perhaps only 50 feet long, ends at the edge of the railroad cut. This is an active, though not heavily used, track, which also functions as the boundary between the Park and the Fort Benning Military Reservation. Lafayette would have come up on the no-longer-evident, steep pathway on the other side of the railroad track onto the fragment here, and at some point have gone off the Road to the Fort.



It takes a practiced eye to see any remnant of the Federal Road, in these woods or across the track. It is highly eroded away, and there are better examples west on our trek.

This fort re-creation (next page and below) shows the earlier Fort, used during the first Creek War, 1813-14. Like many other forts in this area, Mitchell was built by General John Floyd. It was abandoned sometime after 1817, becoming for three years the site of an Indian trading post or factory, and then the Fort was rebuilt just before Lafayette's visit in response to more settler-Creek hostilities. Archaeological digs for the second fort found it centered, smaller, and entirely within the 1813 fort site, but none of it is visible on the surface. Thus Lafayette would have seen neither the original fort then nor none of his familiar fort today.



Panorama of the interior of the 1813 Fort Mitchell recreation. The 1825 Fort would have been, but for a tiny section, entirely inside this structure.



It was near the T-intersection and Fort frontage that the Creeks met Lafayette's Alabama escort of which Brigadier General Woodward was in overall charge. About 200 soldiers and politicians greeted the French General. Lafayette was welcomed to Alabama first by former member of Congress Bolling Hall, then J. Dandridge Bibb, judge, legislator, planter, orator, brother of two governors, and member of the earlier territorial government.

Following the welcome speeches, the entire assembly, led by local chief Little Prince, went from the Fort along a now-visible-but-untended path paralleling the curving railroad track south to the Indian **Ball Ground**, a very large cleared plain that still exists, preserved near the **Creek Trail of Tears Monument**. It is easier for us to travel to it by a dif-

ferent route in our vehicles.

**Drive back from the T-intersection at the Fort and then turn left at the marked side road leading to the Trail of Tears Monument.**



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There are many descriptive markers and plaques, and a scenic overview of the ball field.

At the time of Lafayette's visit there were about 100 tents housing Indians. Two hundred Indians stripped bare and played a rough game using a hard ball and some hand rackets. It was considered to be an alternative form of "safe" tribal warfare. Some today consider it a direct ancestor of the modern sport of lacrosse. Only today it has fewer players, less injuries, and uniforms. The game lasted an hour; Chilly's side won.

According to Levasseur, Lafayette spent time visiting the Indian village there, one of the largest Indian hamlets in the area. A confusing record exists saying that the largest tent

was owned by the innkeeper of the Fort area, and the innkeeper's wife ran an Indian school that Lafayette visited. There *was* a school for Indians about a mile away to the North, run by the wife of a minister, Isaac Smith. There is no account by anyone indicating Lafayette took a side trip to that site, on private property today and, reports say, no evidence of the school there. Perhaps the innkeeper refers to Captain Tom Anthony, who did live among the Indians and who was present in the party with Woodward. He did run this Fort's tavern beginning at least shortly after Lafayette's visit--employment records in this time are pretty scarce--and whom we shall meet again later today at Crabtree's Tavern. Or it could refer to Thomas Crowell, Colonel John Crowell's brother, who took over the inn/tavern on this military site around this time, and, if either he or Anthony had a wife, perhaps that wife assisted at the Smith's school (there is an historic marker about the school near the cemetery between the Fort and Indian Heritage Center turnoff, on the north side of the road). Or, perhaps Levasseur refers to a school in the Ball Field run by the Creeks themselves. We do not know.

Following the game and Lafayette's tour, Lafayette and Colonel Crowell ate lunch. It is



Possible site of Fort Mitchell's Tavern. The main park road—and Federal Road bed—is the cross street, heading to the right.

presumed that the lunch took place at the Fort's Tavern. That is believed to be back at the intersection of the road leading to the Indian Heritage Center and Park's main road. There is a tree with a large horizontal trunk there that allegedly stands in the place of the Tavern. (RN)

It should be noted here that during this timeframe, the word Tavern meant a place for food and lodging, and any alcoholic drinks were served by a person called a tapster in a cage in one of the rooms. A place for just drinks was a saloon. Today, the two words are rather interchangeable for places to get a drink, not so much for lodging.

### Side Trip: Crowell's Home Ruins

These can be found in a woods acting as a buffer around the graveyard—Go into the main National Cemetery entrance; take the Cemetery's entrance road to its end, turning right, and then right again at an unpaved road past the Cemetery's main buildings, total distance about 0.4 miles. The gravel road forks, go left, then make a right in about 0.1 miles onto a dirt road. The chimney will be on your left, in the woods, just as that road ends. Not much to look at, but at least these ruins are original to the Fort Mitchell time of Lafayette. Turn right and complete a third side of a triangle, past a water tank, and back out of the cemetery.



Another possible place for that day-meal could have been at **Colonel Crowell's home**, about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> mile north of the Fort. Crowell was in charge at the Fort, as Indian Agent as well, from before the time of Lafayette's visit, but the exact date of the building of this home is uncertain. For sure, he entertained some travelers at least by 1828, so it is possible that the building, in some early form, existed in 1825.

The home actually survived into the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century before burning down, but it is within the National Cemetery property, with no existing passageway from the Fort. All that is left of it today is a fireplace/chimney, and a few bricks from pylons that kept the house off the ground.

Following lunch, Lafayette left around 2PM to go to his first nightly stop. Though some later writers stated he spent the night at the Tavern at the Fort, that is incorrect.

### **To Crabtree's Tavern on the Missing Federal Road**

Continuing west, the original Federal Road angled off to the right at the turn-off to the Trail of Tears Monument. The Road ultimately crossed near the Military Cemetery's entrance.

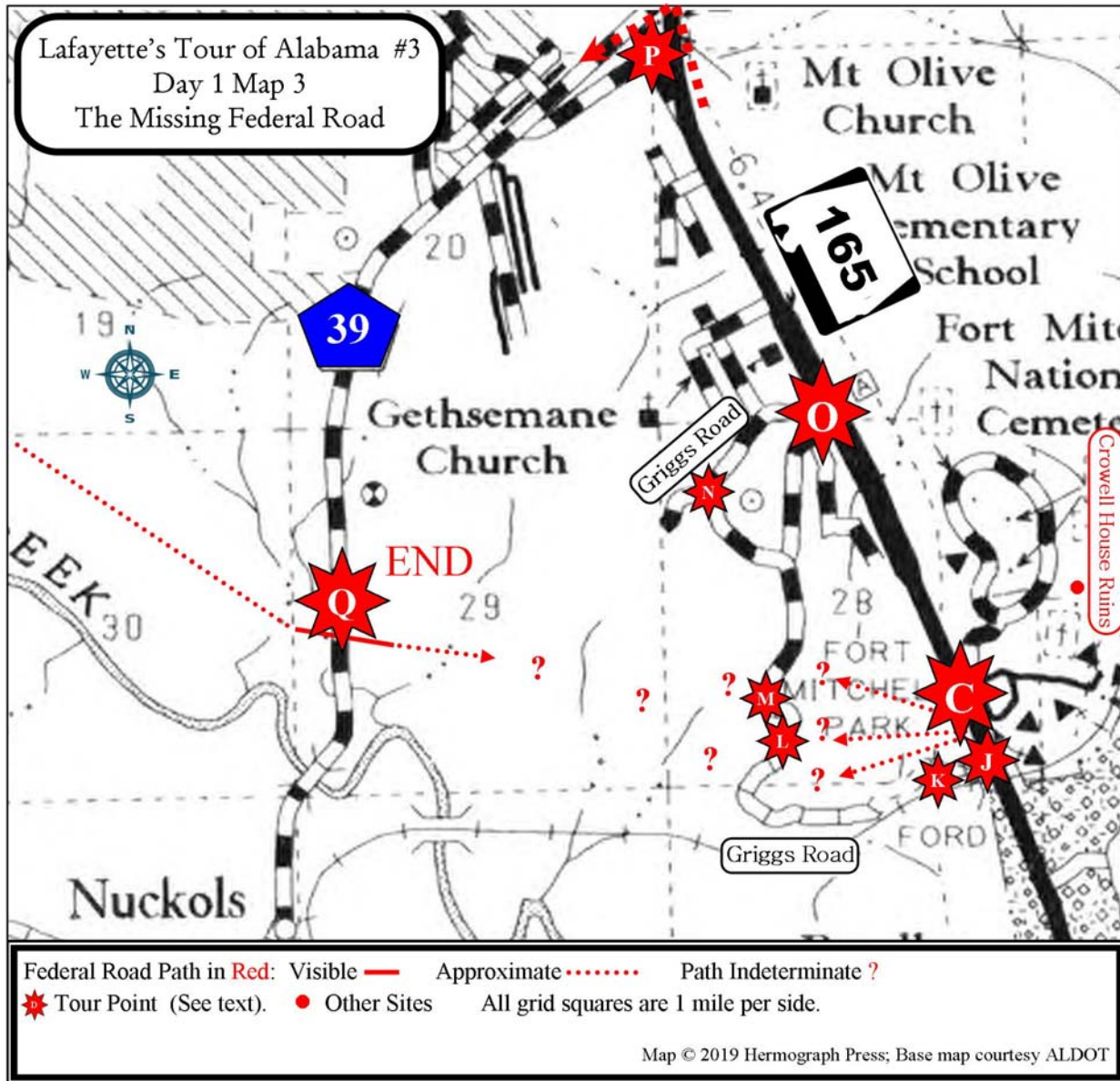
The problem is...from here the path is somewhat disputed, and almost entirely not visible for the next 5-6 miles. As mentioned, the goal is to follow along Lafayette's pathway as closely as possible. From a variety of places mentioned we can be fairly sure that he followed the Federal Road along its more-or-less original path, known sometimes as the Freeman path because it had been surveyed by him back in 1818-19...except not in Creek territory where he was not allowed in. We do know that the "original" pathway, however much it varied and meandered over time, became also known as the Stage Coach Road, meaning it had been in use and widened for a long time, knowing that stagecoach lines began in the 1820s and likely they would prefer to travel on established pathways. So in general we shall try to follow the path along the Stage. Occasionally we will note, even travel, on some alternate Road pathways, notably those noted many years later by Fletcher Hale. We shall call these Original, Freeman or Hale stretches as "strands" or "pathways." But it isn't always easy, or possible, and especially so here west of Fort Mitchell.

Across from the entrance to today's National Cemetery is a wooded area where the Federal Road once lay and it is entirely enclosed by today's Griggs Road. But where was the Road? With no visible trace, at least any trace viewable by the roadside, it is impossible to say. All we can say is that a driver on Griggs will cross it....somewhere. (RN)

Furthermore, from here to Crabtree's Tavern, and for some distance beyond, any Federal Road traces are entirely on private property and unavailable for inspection without permission. There are places where the Federal Road would have crossed today's streets and we will travel to two such places first. But it is a lengthy and criss-crossing journey. **Refer to Map #3 from here.**

**Head out the Fort Mitchell Park entrance, turning south (left)—attempt with care; there isn't a lot of warning of the cars coming North on AL-165.**

**\*J Travel only 0.2 miles to then turn right onto Griggs Road, an unpaved, barely two-lane road that makes an irregular kidney bean-shaped, north-south 'rectangle' that returns to Route 165 some distance to the North. We're starting on the southern edge of the bean, heading West.**



Be aware that there can be water crossing the road long after rains have fallen and the deep ditches on either side that are not useful for traveling on or parking.

**\*K Griggs bears left (0.1 miles from the highway) at a side street called Champion Road after which it becomes a one-lane road that makes gentle zigs and zags. Another 0.8 miles further along where, opposite a locked gateway leading to a railroad track that has more or less paralleled Griggs, the road makes a sharp 90-degree angle turn to the right.**

Paralleling on the right up to the curve is a woods road-path that could be the more southern possible Road remnant. It intersects at this right turn and almost lines up with the gated pathway to the railroad. One might suspect that



this may once have been a roadway for people to go *to* the railroad.

**\*L At a distance of 0.2 miles from the right angle turn (or, 1.1 miles from Route 165), there is a gated driveway on the left, and wire fencing on the right, with a small one-person wide gap in the fence there. You've gone too far if you begin a curve to the left.**

If you park carefully (i.e. not in the deep, side ditch!), coming to a gap in the fencing is a very clearly seen woods road perpendicular to Griggs. It shows no tire ruts and thus is a great candidate for the Old Stage Road. It just might be, but it is a bit south of the expected path shown by Hale and an ADAH's map. It seems to continue on the other side of Griggs through a gated pathway. Aerial photos do not seem to show any continuation towards our ultimate goal, however, to the west.

From here, we have a bit of a detour.

**\*M From the fence gap, drive 0.2 miles where the road becomes paved, and turn right to continue to follow Griggs.**

The two aforementioned maps' predict the Old Stage Road just north of this intersection, but no visible evidence of this can be seen.

**\*N Some 0.7 miles further on, turn right at a stop sign and, after bearing left in about 0.3 miles at new housing, go until the road ends at AL-165, turning left there, heading north; the 'kidney bean' is now completed (\*O).**

**\*P In 1.2 miles, turn left onto Russell County Route 39.**

**\*Q At 2.1 miles from this turn, there will be a pair of dirt driveways exactly opposite each other. Carefully pick one to park in. [Just after this, very visibly ahead, Route 39 curves to the right, the beginning of an S-curve over the Big Uchee Creek.]**

These two 'driveways' are at the correct distance (1/3-mile) north of the bridge that crosses over the Big Uchee Creek for the Old Federal Road path. One can view a little ways in on both sides, though nothing striking will be seen. Regardless, aerial photos do not seem to show any pathways that would be remnants of the Road in either direction. This is private property so don't go past the gates.

This also is about as close to Haynes Crabtree's Tavern as one can get.



What Lafayette might see today in the area where Anthony's/Crabtree's Tavern might be found.

## Crabtree's Tavern

Lafayette's escort of militia, politicians, and Creeks had waited out a several-day delay at Crabtree's, some three-four miles "west" of the Fort along the Federal Road. Today, Lafayette and his escort of about 100 arrived early enough to allow time to wander over to another Indian village. It is clear, from the accounts and from archeology done here, that the Indian village was on the west side of the Little Uchee Creek, and along the Big Uchee Creek. It is also mentioned that Lafayette and party crossed over the "Natural Bridge" 'at the mouth of the Little Uchee' (others say it was at the 'junction of the Big and Little Uchee"). This was not a real rocky bridge, nor an artificial one, but a low ford that in dry times was walk-able from one side to the other. Exactly where that bridge is, though, is a mystery. (RN)

There is another great mystery...where the Tavern was located (RN). It seems most likely that it was in that east bank corner where the Little Uchee meets the Big Uchee, even though no maps show a "Crabtree's Tavern" indicator, and very few travelers' accounts exist about it. The few that mention it simply describe its rather awful status. At least one map shows an indicator for Captain Anthony's Tavern. Anthony did at one time run the place, at least as far back as 1820 and was with Woodward in 1825; when exactly Crabtree took over the management is unrecorded. In 1830 Crabtree is recorded as having sold the site to Thomas Crowell. It is speculation but it is likely that Anthony's Tavern site is the same as Crabtree's.

Regardless, no possible site is publicly accessible. The various modern owners of the properties between this CR-39 Road-crossing and the two sides of the Little Uchee Creek that empties into the Big Uchee about a mile west of here, were kind enough to give this author access to the sites that would be along the Federal Road, though the Road itself is barely evident. Both properties have been extensively farmed, for cotton, lumber, and other crops, with periodic burns and much plowing. Between the modern road and the Little Uchee, there are, at best, some well-buried, even only partial, Road beds visible.

The Federal Road crossed the Little Uchee Creek some distance north of its end and a little bit south of the junction with small Seven-Mile Creek. Mentioned by at least one




Two bridge piles, left center and right center, in the Little Uchee Creek.



1825 traveler, and others after Lafayette's time but not by Woodward or Levasseur, was a real **bridge**, of which today some six piles are still seen in the creek bed—piles are what the vertical base supports holding up a bridge are called. No Road way traces are found on the east side of the Little Uchee here, but two small fragments, one eroded nearby but not quite aligned with the bridge, and one preserved nicely in the owner's farming area, can be seen on the west side. Clearly this is the path of the Federal Road, as best as we can match between reality and old maps. But this Uchee Bridge is not the Natural Bridge.

An alternative site for Crabtree's Tavern has been proposed, just a short walk west of this bridge, a no-longer extant but previously photographed wooden cabin (RN). Without archaeology, there is no way to nail down for sure where Anthony's and Crabtree's Tavern(s) existed. In either case, Lafayette would be sorely disappointed today; there is no evidence of the Tavern nor the Indian encampment he visited. Still, it is as rural now as it was then.

Regrettably, unlike Lafayette, the modern traveler has no lodging to stay at here. You will have to retrace your steps back to AL-165 and head to Phenix City or Columbus, or head west to continue Lafayette's footsteps into the path of his second day in Alabama. We will begin tomorrow's driving journey where we left off today, at the junction of the two driveways with CR-39. 

### The Federal Road Bypass

Given that the Federal Road between Fort Mitchell and Seale, AL is either mostly erased or inaccessible to today's drivers, some may want to bypass the eastern Russell County parts and go straight to the next accessible parts along US-431. Here is a "bypass to this early interstate," mapped onto **Map #1**—ending on **Map #4**-- and would be:

**\*C Starting from the entrance to Fort Mitchell Historical Park and Museum, turn right onto AL-165 and drive north.**

**\*B In 5.5 miles, turn left onto US-431 South.**

Then: Option 1

**\*B2 After 1.7 miles, turn left and cross the northbound US-431 traffic onto Freeman Road, and travel 0.1 miles to its end.**

**\*B3 Turn right onto CR-137 Old Seale Highway. The Big Uchee Creek bridge is in 4.0 miles; the Federal Road from Anthony/highway from here. Rejoin Day 2's tour path at its point \*E at CR-24 in 1.3 miles. This Option maximizes your contact with the Federal Road route.**

Or...Option 2

**From \*B, the turn from AL-165 onto US-431, drive 8.8 miles south to rejoin Day 2's tour path a little further down at its point \*G, a right turn onto what once was US-431 but is now just another part of today's CR-137.**