



Here are a few suggested stops along your way through the history gallery with some brief information.
Please feel free to stop and explore any part of the Museum.

(SS8H1, SS8H2, SS8H5, SS8H6, SS8H9, SS8H10, SS8H11, SS8G1, SS8E1, SS8E3, L6-8RH1, L6-8RH2, L6-8RH4, L6-8RH7, L6-8RH8)

1 FLOOR MAP ENTRANCE TO HISTORY GALLERY

On this map you can identify the location of Columbus, Atlanta, Savannah and the Chattahoochee River. Prior to the Civil War Columbus was the largest city in Georgia, mainly because of the mighty Chattahoochee River. Not only did larger cities in the Northeast use river to transport cargo like tobacco and cotton but textile mills such as the Eagle and Phenix used the water to help run the mills themselves. Columbus was in a prime location on the river, lying near the fall line which made boat passage impossible on the river all boats had to stop in Columbus and off load their cargo and then reload on a boat below the fall line to continue their trip down the river all the way to Apalachicola, Florida. At one point Columbus was a popular honeymoon destination for newlyweds.

A Oscar the Alligator was found in the Chattahoochee River close to Columbus. He is estimated to be about 50 years old, weighed 800 pounds and is 15 feet long! He was donated to the Museum in 1987.

2 MISSISSIPPIAN DWELLING

This structure is a recreation of a wattle and daub house that dates from around 1400 A.D. This time period is known as the Mississippian Era. Up to this point most inhabitants were nomadic and did not have permanent structures and did not function communally, meaning that they did not have organized groups like what we now recognize as tribes. The mid-point of the Mississippian period brought about more organized communities that built permanent structures and learned how to work the land to grow crops more effectively. The building itself has very innovative details like a raised doorway to keep out rain and snakes as well as a perfectly slanted roof that allows smoke from the fire to escape from the top but does not allow rain in. The walls are built with bamboo shoots and then covered with mud or clay that acts as insulation.

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3 URBAN SLAVE HOME

A common misconception is that all slaves lived on plantations or farms in rural areas. However, in 1850 it is estimated that approximately 400,000 slaves lived in urban areas throughout the South. This cabin looks like a home that slaves would have lived in inside Columbus proper. Often male slaves were skilled artisans like blacksmiths, woodworkers and masons. Many of the slaves that resided within city limits were actually from rural areas but were sent to the city during the off season to work by their white owners. By the end of the Civil War most skilled workers in the South were freedmen who had learned their trades in slavery. Women in urban areas often served as domestic servants, seamstresses and cooks.

C Did you know that the last official battle of the Civil War was found in Columbus and what is now called Phenix City? Check out the movie clip showing a reenactment of the last battle!

4 TEXTILE MILLS

Prior to the Civil War Columbus was a booming mill town with some of the largest textile mills operating in the country. During the Civil War mills produced everything from blankets to uniforms to outfit the soldiers. Even after the decimation of Columbus and Phenix City (then called Girard) during the last part of the Civil War the major mills in Columbus reopened and continued to produce into the 20th century. One of the major developments that came from the mill culture of the late 1800s early 1900s was the creation of child labor laws. Photographer Lewis Wickie Hine was hired to travel down the eastern seaboard and into the South to photograph that conditions that many children worked in. Hines photographed many mill workers in the Valley region and those photographs led to the passing of the Child Labor Laws.

D The Eagle Mill, one of the pioneer mills in the area, was burned down during the Civil War. It rose from the ashes in 1866 renamed the Eagle & Phenix Mills to signify its rebirth.