

# Explore

Decatur-Morgan

A photograph of two young boys, one on the left and one on the right, leaning over a large, illuminated kinetic sand table. They are both focused on the sand, which is lit with a vibrant green and blue light. The boy on the left is wearing a dark hoodie, and the boy on the right is wearing a blue shirt under a dark jacket. In the background, there are museum displays with colorful panels and text, including one that says "FORESTS".

## Amazing Creatures & Unique Features

Experience a kinetic sand table or glimpse rare animals at the new Cook Museum of Natural Science

## Pond Spring's History

The post-Civil War home of Gen. Joe Wheeler lets visitors view a bygone era

## Where to Eat

From barbecue to Mexican cuisine to pizza and fine dining, local restaurants have diverse and delicious menus

## Play Ball!

Minor league baseball is back in north Alabama and even the team's Trash Pandas nickname is a hit



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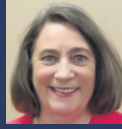
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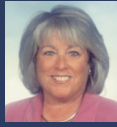
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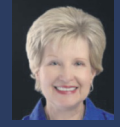
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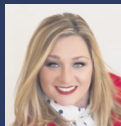


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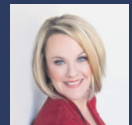


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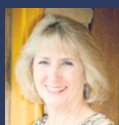
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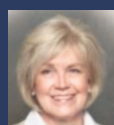
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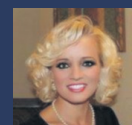
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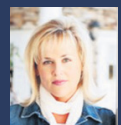
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256-654-9180



Hunter Burt  
256-221-7709



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256-432-7622



Leighann Turner  
256-303-1519



Jennifer Douglass  
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256-565-2560



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256-503-1289



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256-227-6004



Pam Garland  
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Sam Heflin  
256-318-4270

# Explore

2020-21

Decatur-Morgan

## INSIDE this issue

### ATTRACTIONS

[9]

#### THE AREA'S OFFERINGS

From water parks to museums to historical sites, there's plenty to see and do

[16]

#### PLAY BALL

The Rocket City Trash Pandas debut a new stadium and beloved nickname in 2020.

[18]

#### THE GENERAL

Gen. Joe Wheeler served in the Confederate Army and later for the U.S. Army and in Congress.



[30]

#### FORE!

There are plenty of public and private golf courses where you can tee it up in Morgan County.

[34]

#### FAMILY FRIENDLY MUNICIPAL PARKS

[38]

#### PERFORMING ARTS

[42]

#### COOK MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

Decatur's newest attraction has exhibits on nature, geology, space and more.



### FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

[44]

#### CELEBRATE WITH US

### LODGING

[64]

#### WHERE TO STAY



### OUTDOORS

[66]

#### BIRDWATCHING, HIKING, CYCLING AND PADDLING

### TIME TO EAT

[70]

#### BIG BOB GIBSON

Barbecue restaurant's fame spreads nationally

[72]

#### DINING GUIDE

50 restaurants that'll satisfy any craving





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Publisher  
CLINT SHELTON

Operations Director  
SCOTT BROWN

Executive Editor  
BRUCE MCLELLAN

City Editor  
ERIC FLEISCHAUER

Assistant City Editor  
FRANKLIN HARRIS

Page Designer  
WILLIAM CROSS

Contributing Writers  
CATHERINE GODBEY  
CONSTANCE SMITH  
DEANGELO MCDANIEL  
MICHAEL WETZEL  
MATTHEW SPEAKMAN

Contributing Photographers  
JERONIMO NISA  
DAN BUSEY

Circulation Director  
WALTER GOGGINS

Circulation Manager  
REBECCA BRAUN

Advertising Director  
BARETTA TAYLOR

Advertising Graphic Artists  
STEPHEN JOHNSON  
RHONDA STENNETT

Retail Advertising  
KEVIN MORRIS  
SHELIA SMITH  
EDDIE JOHNS  
ANNA BAKER  
TERRI HASTON  
MICHELLE LOTT

HOW TO REACH US  
For story ideas or comments:  
Bruce McLellan  
256-340-2431

For distribution questions:  
Rebecca Braun  
256-340-2414

For advertising questions  
Baretta Taylor  
256-340-2370

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## Welcome to Decatur and Morgan County!



### ON THE COVER

Photograph by Jeronimo Nisa

The new Cook Museum of Natural Science lets visitors experience an immersive cave, experiment with a kinetic sand table and glimpse rare hellbender salamanders.

Read through the pages in this magazine and you'll discover one of the nation's best-kept secrets. Decatur offers visitors more things to see and do than most cities of its size.

It all starts with the Cook Museum of Natural Science that opened June 7, 2019, in downtown Decatur. Earlier this year, the Cook Museum finished second out of 20 nominees for the nation's Best New Museum in the USA Today 2020 Readers' Choice Travel Award contest. The \$32.4 million facility contains 62,000 square feet of exhibit galleries that include a 15,000-gallon saltwater aquarium, an immersive cave, an interactive sand table and live animals.

For fun and cooling off during the summer months, it's hard to beat Decatur's Point Mallard Aquatic Center, which is celebrating 50 years of operation. The water park includes one of the nation's first wave pools, water slides, a lazy river attraction and children's play area.

If you prefer simpler pursuits, immerse yourself in Decatur's natural beauty that revolves around the Tennessee River. Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is the city's crown jewel with its hiking trails, nature exhibits and a visitors' center bird observation building.

The city also has a burgeoning arts community. Visual arts exhibits are open throughout the year at the Carnegie Visual Arts Center and Alabama Center for the Arts (ACA). The Alabama Arts Hall of Fame, which includes displays on famous artists, is located in the ACA's performing arts building.

Railroad buffs will be interested in Decatur's Historic Railroad Depot. The restored depot, which was built in 1905 by Southern Railway, includes memorabilia, photographs and a model train layout depicting the city.

This is only a sampling of what is offered in Decatur, the rest of Morgan County and the surrounding area. This magazine is a guide to all of the natural wonders, attractions and festivals that make visiting — and living — in the Decatur area so pleasurable. If you can't fit it all in during one visit, that's understandable. We'll just plan to see you again soon.



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# POINT MALLARD AQUATIC CENTER

While J. Gilmer Blackburn was Decatur's mayor from 1962-68, he visited Munich, Germany, to get a firsthand look at a wave-making facility that was the rage in Europe. When he saw the German pool, he envisioned his hometown having its own wave pool.

"Seeing that wave pool in Munich sealed his desire to put a wave pool at Point Mallard," said Jack Charlton, Blackburn's former Auburn fraternity brother.

On Aug. 8, 1970, the wave pool, one of the first constructed in the United States, and an Olympic-sized pool opened at Point Mallard Park and helped it become the hub of Decatur's social circle.

The park, which celebrates 50 years this year, hosts many of Decatur's most popular events, including the Alabama Hot-Air Balloon Festival on Memorial Day weekend, Spirit of America on the Fourth of July, Dragon Boat Festival on Mother's Day weekend and Battle for Decatur, a Civil War reenactment, on Labor Day weekend.

A former president, national politicians, chart-topping musicians, astronauts, Silver Star soldiers and Olympic medalists have visited the park. The pool served as a training facility for the 1976 U.S. Olympic diving team, which included Greg Louganis, a gold medalist in the 1984 and 1988 Olympics, and Jenny Chandler, a gold medalist in the 1976 Olympics.

Over the years, the J. Gilmer Blackburn Aquatic Center, named for the former mayor, expanded to include speed slides, a lazy river and children's area. On average, more than 150,000 people visit the water park every season, which opens Memorial Day weekend and closes on Labor Day.

**Season:** Open daily from May 23 to Aug. 11 and open on weekends from Aug. 15 through Sept. 6. Also open Labor Day, Sept. 7, the last day of the season.

**Hours:** Opens at 10 a.m. Closes at 8 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and July 4. Closes at 6 p.m. all other days.

**Admission:** Prices vary by day and age.

**Website:** [pointmallardpark.com](http://pointmallardpark.com)

**Telephone:** 256-341-4900

**Point Mallard water park includes wave pool, lazy river, water slides and more.**





## OLD STATE BANK

Alabama's oldest standing bank building offers visitors a glimpse into the past. Built in 1833, the building served as a hospital, guardhouse, bank and dance hall and was one of three buildings in Decatur that survived the Civil War. The building's columns still show scars from the bullets fired. Unique features include a banking lobby with the original walk-in vault and replica of tellers' cages, an apartment area furnished with items from the 1830s and a community garden.

Old State Bank  
925 Bank St. N.E., Decatur

**256-341-4818**

**Website:** [Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

**Hours:** 9:30 a.m.-noon, 1-4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

**Admission:** Free



# CARNEGIE ARTS

Originally Decatur's first public library, the Carnegie Visual Arts Center houses rotating exhibits featuring local, regional and national artists. Past exhibits included works by folk artist Mose T, the Gee's Bend Quilters, David Gordon, who worked on "SpongeBob SquarePants," biophilia artist and visual ecologist Doug Baulos, Smithsonian Institute's traveling "Water 1 Ways" and mixed-media artist Sloane Bibb. Focused on expanding beyond the arts center's walls, the Carnegie installed exhibits at the Somerville Public Library and the Huntsville International Airport. The center also oversees Carnegie Carnival, one of Decatur's premier events.

**Carnegie Visual Arts Center**  
207 Church St. N.E., Decatur

**Phone:** 256-341-0562

**Website:** [Carnegiearts.org](http://Carnegiearts.org)

**Hours:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Friday; 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday

**Donations accepted**





# JESSE OWENS MUSEUM

Created in honor of one of Lawrence County's most prestigious athletes, the Jesse Owens Museum and Park in Danville celebrates the life and legacy of the Olympic legend who captured the world's attention in 1936. Built in Oakville, the childhood home of Jesse Owens, who won four gold medals at the Olympics in Berlin and dismantled Adolf Hitler's ideology of Aryan supremacy, the museum and park features a statue of Owens, a replica of Owens' childhood home, a gold medal tree, a long jump pit, trophies Owens won in high school and replicas of his track uniforms, shoes and medals.

**Jesse Owens Museum and Park**  
7019 County Road 203, Danville

**Phone:** 256-974-3636

**Website:** [Jesseowensmemorialpark.com](http://Jesseowensmemorialpark.com)

**Hours:** 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Tuesday & Thursday-Saturday; 1-4 p.m., Sunday

**Admission charged**





# HISTORIC RAILROAD DEPOT

Built by Southern Railway in 1905, the historic Decatur depot features railroad memorabilia, artifacts and photographs and a model train layout depicting the city. Notable pieces include the original depot superintendent's desk, the baggage cart and benches, all from 1905. Restored in 2015 and 2016, the building's original features include the doors and brick and plaster walls. The museum celebrates Decatur's railroad heritage, which dates back to the 1830s when the first railroad west of the Allegheny Mountains, the Tuscumbia, Courtland and Decatur railroad, was built.

Historic Railroad Depot  
701 Railroad St. N.W., Decatur

**Website:** [Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

**Hours:** 1-3 p.m., Monday-Tuesday; 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Wednesday; 10 a.m.-noon, Thursday and Saturday

**Admission:** Free



# PRINCESS THEATRE

Founded as a livery stable in 1887 and transformed into a vaudeville playhouse in December 1919, the Princess Theatre in downtown Decatur has been an entertainment center in north Alabama for a century. Known for its neon marquee, the 677-seat theater has hosted George Washington Carver, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Tony Randall, Cloris Leachman, the Count Basie Orchestra, Arlo Guthrie, The Blind Boys of Alabama, St. Paul and the Broken Bones, the Secret Sisters and Roseanne Cash.

**Princess Theatre Center for the Performing Arts**  
112 Second Ave. N.E., Decatur

**Phone:** 256-350-1745

**Website:** [Princesstheatre.org](http://Princesstheatre.org)

**Admission:** charged for shows



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**Morgan County Archives**  
624 Bank St. N.E., Decatur

**Phone:** 256-351-4726

**Hours:** 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Tuesday-Friday

**Admission:** Free

Housing the history of Morgan County, the archives, located in the 1927 Tennessee Valley Bank Building, includes exhibits about the area's role in the Civil War and the Scottsboro Boys Trail.



# TOYOTA FIELD

## READY TO PLAY BALL!

The Trash Pandas have the hottest nickname in pro sports and a new \$47 million baseball stadium

**By Matthew Speakman**

Before the Rocket City Trash Pandas even played a game or had a stadium, the team was famous.

Nearly 30,000 people participated in a two-month public vote to choose the team's nickname, and more than \$500,000 in Trash Pandas merchandise was sold in the first six weeks after the nickname was chosen in September of 2018. That was a minor league record in merchandise sales for that time period.

Since then, the Trash Pandas have made over \$2 million in merchandise sales.

"The Trash Pandas name and logo has already generated a buzz both nationwide and internationally," said Josh Caray, the director of broadcasting and baseball information for the Trash Pandas. "We've done it without really doing anything from a competitive standpoint. It's unlike anything I've seen."

The team is the first minor league baseball team in north Alabama since the Huntsville Stars stopped playing at Joe Davis Stadium in 2014.

Its venue will be Toyota Field, a \$47 million baseball stadium off of Interstate 565 in Madison.

"We are putting all of our emphasis into the game day experience," said Lindsey Knupp, vice president of marketing, promotions and entertainment for the Trash Pandas. "That's what it's all about with minor league baseball."

The Trash Pandas are a part of the Los Angeles Angels' farm system, competing in the Double-A Southern League. That league features the Birmingham Barons, the Chattanooga Lookouts and the Montgomery Biscuits.

The team aims to be the face of north Alabama sports, adopting the name "Rocket City" instead of Huntsville or Madison to encompass other cities near Huntsville, including Decatur and Hartselle.

The stadium is a 20-minute drive from downtown Decatur, and about a 30-minute drive from Athens and Hartselle. The stadium is located between exits 9 and 13 on I-565, situated in the heart of an ever-growing Madison area.

"We've had people getting mini (ticket) plans from people who live even 45 minutes away from the stadium," Knupp said. "I think that fan base is there, and it's spread out more than just our immediate Huntsville or Madison area."

The stadium itself holds up to 7,500 people with 4,000 of those being fixed seats. The combination of standing-room-only areas and actual seats seemed destined to make Trash Pandas games seem like social events.

The right field area has a section of grass where patrons can sit as well as an area named the Rock Porch for bars and food.

"I tell people that it's not so much a baseball field, but a carnival



with a baseball diamond in the middle of it,” Caray said. “You need that, because you can’t just rely on the game of baseball. You can’t expect people to sit there for three hours when they can watch the major league product at home.”

Adding to the social feel of the ballpark is Rocket City’s promotional calendar. Monday night games will be for fans with dogs. The first 500 dogs receive a special gift. The first 2,000 fans ages 15 and older receive a complimentary T-shirt for Friday games. Kids get to run the bases after every Sunday home game.

The Trash Pandas have fireworks planned after every Thursday and Saturday home game as well.

“You need other things to help people get excited to come into the ballpark night after night,” Caray said. “That’s exactly what we’ve devoted ourselves to.”

Single-game ticket prices will be \$14 in advance for reserved seats. Those will increase to \$16 the day of the game. Standing-room-only tickets will be \$8.

The Trash Pandas provide north Alabama baseball fans an opportunity to adopt a professional sports team outside of the local high school or college they root for.

“This was a tremendous void when the Stars left,” Caray said. “It’s a great baseball area, but it needed an upgrade. If minor league baseball is going to survive, it has to get with the times, and that’s exactly what Toyota Field has to offer.”

Check the Trash Pandas’ schedule: [milb.com/rocket-city](http://milb.com/rocket-city)





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# POND SPRING



## Gen. Joe Wheeler is one of Lawrence County's most recognizable figures

Story by Deangelo McDaniel

**W**hile there has been disagreement about Gen. Joe Wheeler's talents as a Confederate general, there is no disagreement that his name is one of the most recognizable in the Tennessee Valley.

"If you talk about Lawrence County history, at some point his name will surface because there are so many things in the county named after him," Archivist Wendy Hazle said.

There is Joe Wheeler State Park, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Wheeler Dam and his historic home on Alabama 20 between Courtland and Hillsboro, she said.

Also, Wheeler and Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry, who both are from Georgia and fought for the Confederate States of America, represent Alabama in the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol.

Despite his larger-than-life presence in the Tennessee Valley, Wheeler was a small man, about 5 feet, 2 inches, who never weighed more than 120 pounds.

Much of his popularity in the Decatur area is linked to his service in the Confederate Army, but nationally, Wheeler received acclaim for his service in the U.S. Army after the Civil War.

After a successful political career that pushed for pensions for soldiers on both sides of the Civil War, Wheeler, in 1895, started to inquire about serving in the U.S. Army if America went to war with Spain.

By this time, the ex-Confederate was a familiar face in Washington, D.C. He was 60 in May 1897 when he gave a speech in the House about the situation in Cuba. He told Congress that the Spanish regime in Cuba had driven 800 Americans from their property and that they were starving in "Cuban towns and villages."

About 11 months later, he delivered another speech criticizing the Republican Party for its stance against war and introduced a resolution calling for military intervention after the USS Maine exploded in Havana harbor.

His family, especially daughter Annie Wheeler, was against the general participating in the war. But Wheeler had years earlier filed his application with the War Department to serve in the U.S. Army in Cuba.

President William McKinley received dozen of letters, most of them supporting Wheeler's commission in the Volunteer Army. On April 26, 1898, the president summoned Wheeler to the White House, primarily for the purpose of inquiring about his

health and desire to serve, historical documents show.

Wheeler left with the promise of a commission — and when the call came — he resigned his congressional seat to fight for the United States in Cuba and the Philippines.

Wheeler proved his worth during the Spanish-American War and negotiated the surrender of Santiago and the Spanish Army in Cuba. Later, he fought in the Philippines.

He spent the last years of his life mostly traveling, and while visiting his sister in Brooklyn, New York, caught pneumonia and died Jan. 25, 1906.

Historians agree that daughter Annie spent the rest of her life painting the picture the public sees of Wheeler today.

The extent of Wheeler's popularity among former soldiers for the Confederacy and Union, however, is found in the Wheeler family papers at the Alabama Department of Archives and History in Montgomery.

Some soldiers sought help getting pensions. Others wrote letters apologizing for missing Confederate reunions that Wheeler attended, while some requested his help with local political appointments.

He was popular among veterans because he supported and pushed congressional leaders to pass the 1890 pension act that helped aging veterans who fought on both sides of the war. The bill, in part, widened eligibility to include non-service-related problems, but also allowed black Union soldiers to draw pensions.

On Nov. 11, 1890, the Rev. Benjamin J. Donnell, who owned and operated The Decatur Republican, an early newspaper serving the black community, wrote to Wheeler from Bellevue, Mississippi. Donnell, referring to white workers at the Board of Pension Examiners in Decatur, stated: “The whites here told me that if I would get a recommendation from you and other good citizens, they would look after me in a friendly way.”

In another letter dated Dec. 8, 1890, Donnell told Wheeler that he had “served my country faithfully” as a private in Co. C, 5th Regiment of Heavy Artillery, U.S. Colored Troops Volunteers of Mississippi.

Donnell, 42, said he suffered injuries during the war that caused him heart and lung problems and “incapacitated me from the performance of manual labor.”

He sought Wheeler’s help because the surgeons who treated him during the war were dead. He told the general that he could not care for his wife and three small children. Although Wheeler’s role is not documented, Donnell received a pension.

The state has spent millions renovating the home former slaves constructed for Wheeler after the Civil War.

The Pond Spring of today, however, is much different from the area Wheeler visited in 1863 when he crossed the Tennessee River

with Confederate troops and camped at the nearby Caledonia plantation that Richard Jones owned.

His future wife, Daniella Jones Sherrod, already owned Pond Spring, a prosperous 1,760-acre plantation that reached from Alabama 20 to the Mountain Home community.

Although Union troops passed through Pond Spring, there is no evidence that Wheeler visited the site until after the war when he proposed marriage to Daniella.

The widow said no to his first proposal, but the paroled general returned almost six months later. Daniella married him in the parlor of her father's Caledonia plantation home Feb. 7, 1866.

After their wedding, Wheeler and Daniella moved to New Orleans. As part of a deal to get Wheeler and his daughter back to Lawrence County during Reconstruction, Daniella's father gave them the part of Pond Spring Plantation.

In 1870, Wheeler built a store and the family continued to prosper. Black and white sharecroppers worked the land, which now totaled more than 7,100 acres.

Wheeler appears on a Lawrence County census for the first time in 1870. He has real estate valued at \$2,000 and no personal property. His wife has land valued at \$12,000 and a personal estate worth \$6,000.

Before his death, Wheeler owned two of Lawrence County's largest plantations and some of its best riverfront property.

The Wheeler estate of today totals about 16,000 acres and fronts about three miles on the Tennessee River.

Most of the general’s and his wife’s land acquisition took place after the court of law and equity in Courtland gave him a law license in 1872. The couple bought property. Also, court records show that landowners borrowed money from the Wheelers, and they foreclosed when payments weren't made. Wheeler also purchased property through tax sales.

In 1993, the state acquired 50 acres of the Pond Spring plantation, including the general's home, a log cabin believed built before 1818 and later used as slave quarters, a log barn, a 19th-century icehouse and the family cemeteries.

### Pond Spring

The historic Gen. Joe Wheeler home is located just west of Decatur at 12280 Alabama 20, Hillsboro, 3564

**Phone:** 256-637-8513

**Hours:** 9 a.m. - noon and 1-4 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday; 1- 5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day.

**Admission:** Ranges from \$3 to \$8



## IVY GREEN

The site of the birthplace of Helen Keller features the home and grounds, including the famous pump where teacher Annie Sullivan showed a young Keller how to spell w-a-t-e-r in sign language. That single lesson opened the outside world to the child.

**Ivy Green: The Birthplace of Helen Keller**  
300 N. Commons St. W. Tuscumbia

**Phone:** 256-383-4066

**Website:** [Helenkellerbirthplace.org](http://Helenkellerbirthplace.org)

**Hours:** 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Saturday





## JOE WHEELER STATE PARK

From golfing to boating to lakeside dining, Joe Wheeler State Park offers a variety of resort activities and amenities. Its lodge includes a restaurant and accommodations. The park also offers hiking trails, cabins, cottages, RV campsites, fishing, boat slips, a marina, boat rentals, and convention and banquet facilities.

**Joe Wheeler State Park**  
4401 McLean Drive, Rogersville

**Phone:** 256-247-5461

**Website:** [alapark.com/parks/joe-wheeler-state-park](http://alapark.com/parks/joe-wheeler-state-park).

**Admission:** No charge for trails, and rates vary for golf, dining and marina.





# THE ROSENBAUM HOUSE

This is the opportunity to experience the work of Frank Lloyd Wright from inside the walls of one of the homes he designed. The 1,540-square-foot home is the only Wright-designed building in Alabama. It was created in a Usonian style that incorporates organic simplicity by bringing in the outdoors.

## **The Rosenbaum House**

601 Riverview Drive, Florence

**Phone:** 256-718-5050

**Website:** [www.wrightinalabama.com](http://www.wrightinalabama.com)

**Hours:** 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday - Saturday and 1-4 p.m. Sunday

**Admission charged**





# U.S. SPACE & ROCKET CENTER

With interactive simulators, a Saturn V Rocket and thousands of rocketry and space artifacts, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center offers visitors a chance to explore outer space. The center also hosts traveling exhibits.

**U.S. Space & Rocket Center**  
1 Tranquility Base, Huntsville

**Phone:** 1-800-637-7223

**Website:** Rocketcenter.com

**Hours:** 9 a.m.-5 p.m., daily

**Admission charged**



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# EARLYWORKS

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[dreamhomemortgagellc.com](http://dreamhomemortgagellc.com)



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### EarlyWorks Children's Museum

404 Madison St., Huntsville

**Website:** [Earlyworks.com](http://Earlyworks.com)

**Hours:** 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday

**Admission charged**



# MOORESVILLE

Mooresville, the Limestone County town “older than the state” — as the dozens of residents proudly claim — is home to a church where James Garfield preached in 1863, a post office built in 1840 and the Stagecoach Inn and Tavern built before 1825. President Andrew Johnson worked in Mooresville while serving as a tailor’s apprentice. The town also served as the filming site of Walt Disney’s “Tom & Huck.” The quaint town currently houses a bike shop, a candy store and a coffee house.

## Mooresville

**Website:** [Mooresvilleal.org](http://Mooresvilleal.org)



# ALABAMA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Windows along the Alabama Center for the Arts in downtown Decatur offer passers-by a peek at exhibits currently on display in the free gallery. The center's displays range from national watercolor exhibits to life-size sculptures to creations by the area's youth. Along with the gallery, the Alabama Center for the Arts' performing arts building houses the Alabama Arts Hall of Fame. The permanent exhibit pays tribute to actors Dean Jones and Nell Carter, musicians the Drive-By Truckers and Emmylou Harris, composer Henry Panion III, author Truman Capote, photographer Tillman Crane, artists Nall Hollis, Richard Zoellner, Mildred Nungester Wolfe, the quilters of Gee's Bend and Bruce Larsen and dancer Wes Chapman.

## Alabama Center for the Arts

133 Second Ave. N.E., Decatur

**Phone:** 256-260-4293

**Website:** [alabamacenterforthearts.org](http://alabamacenterforthearts.org)

**Hours:** 8 a.m.-8 p.m., Monday-Thursday; 8 a.m.-noon, Friday

**Free Admission**



Built over 40 years by Brother Joseph Zoetl, a monk at St. Bernard Abbey, the grotto features 125 small stone and cement structures, including St. Peter's Basilica, the Monte Cassino Abbey, Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Alamo in San Antonio, German castles, South African shrines and scenes from the Holy Land.

**Ave Maria Grotto**

1600 St. Bernard Drive, Cullman

**Phone:** 256-734-3946

**Website:** [Avemariagrotto.com](http://Avemariagrotto.com)

**Hours:** April to September: 9 a.m.-6 p.m., daily  
October to March: 9 a.m.-5 p.m., daily

**Admission charged**



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# ALABAMA VETERANS MUSEUM

Artifacts spanning from the Revolutionary War to present day fill the Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives in Athens. Through the items — uniforms, medals, photographs, letters and weapons — the museum curators bring the experiences of Alabamians in the military to life.

**Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives**  
100 Pryor St., Athens

**Phone:** 256-771-7578

**Website:** [Alabamaveteransmuseum.com](http://Alabamaveteransmuseum.com)

**Hours:** 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Monday-Saturday

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Fran Green and Helen Roan enjoy a stroll at Rhodes Ferry Park beside the Tennessee River



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# GOLF IN MORGAN COUNTY

The options are varied for those looking for a round of golf in Morgan County.

Point Mallard, a public course, offers 18 holes covering 6,988 yards close to the waters of Wheeler Lake. The course, designed by John LaFoy, is part of the Point Mallard Park complex that is operated by the City of Decatur.

Burningtree Country Club is a private club that offers special opportunities to golfers wanting to test their skills on the 7,000-yard course across 180 acres. The course was

designed by prolific golf course designer George W. Cobb, who wanted to create attractive layouts that the average golfer would find enjoyable.

The course is home to the annual Spirit of America Classic. It has also hosted qualifying rounds for the U.S. Amateur Championship.

Quail Creek Resort in Hartselle features a par-71 course that covers 6,500 yards. It was co-designed by John C. Eyster Sr. and Matthew L. Nail.

## MORGAN COUNTY

### Point Mallard Golf Course

2600A Point Mallard Drive, Decatur  
Pro shop: 256-341-4925

### Burningtree Country Club (Private)

2521 Burningtree Drive, Decatur  
Pro shop: 256-355-5982

### Quail Creek Resort

233 Quail Creek Drive, Hartselle  
Pro shop: 256-784-5033

## LIMESTONE COUNTY

### Southern Gayles Golf Course

22230 Mooresville Road, Athens  
Pro shop: 256-232-9888

### Canebrake Club (Private)

23015 Founders Circle, Athens  
Pro shop: 256-232-2412

## MADISON COUNTY

### Hampton Cove Course

450 Old Highway 431, Owens Cross Roads  
Pro shop: 256-551-1818

## Sunset Landing

346 James Record Road SW,  
Huntsville  
Pro shop: 256-464-5050

## CULLMAN COUNTY

### Chesley Oaks Golf Course

1035 County Road 1583, Cullman  
Pro shop: 256-796-9808

### Terri Pines Country Club

700 Pine Hill Drive, Cullman  
Pro shop: 256-739-0738



# HUNTSVILLE MUSEUM OF ART

The Huntsville Museum of Art features a permanent collection of more than 3,200 objects, including pieces of American art from the 19th and 20th centuries, pieces by Andy Warhol, James McNeill Whistler and Robert Rauschenberg and contemporary works in wood, glass, metal and clay. The museum also hosts traveling exhibits

**Huntsville Museum of Art**  
300 Church St. S., Huntsville

**Phone:** 256-535-4350

**Website:** [Hsvmuseum.org](http://Hsvmuseum.org)

**Hours:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Thursday; noon-5 p.m., Sunday

**Admission Charged**





# HUNTSVILLE BOTANICAL GARDEN

Covering 112 acres, Huntsville Botanical Garden features an open-aired butterfly house, a Biblical garden with plants mentioned in the Bible, perennial, aquatic, herb, vegetable and daylily gardens, dogwood trees and a nature trail with black tupelo, red maple, sycamore and sweetgum trees. Two of the garden's most popular events are the Scarecrow Trail in the fall and Galaxy of Lights in the winter.

**Huntsville Botanical Garden**

4747 Bob Wallace Ave., Huntsville

**Phone:** 256-830-4447

**Website:** [Hsvbg.org](http://Hsvbg.org)

**Hours:** April to September: 9 a.m.-7 p.m., Monday-Thursday; 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Sunday  
October to March: 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Saturday; 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday

**Admission charged**

# OAKVILLE INDIAN MOUNDS

**Oakville Indian Mounds**

1219 County Road 187, Danville

**Phone:** 256-905-2499

**Website:** [Oakvilleindianmounds.com](http://Oakvilleindianmounds.com)

**Hours:** 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Friday; 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday

**Admission charged**

Oakville Indian Mounds – home to a museum, artifacts dating back to 10,000 B.C. and what historians believe to be the largest Woodland Mound in Alabama – puts a spotlight on North Alabama’s Native American history. The site offers inside and outside activities with hiking trails, fishing and thousands of artifacts, providing a look into the area’s beginnings when Creek, Yuchi, Shawnee, Chickasaw and Cherokee Indians lived in Oakville. In 1924, a team from the Smithsonian identified five mounds, including two that remained intact. Covering 1.5 acres and 27 feet high, the Oakville Ceremonial Woodland Mound is the largest Woodland Mound in Alabama. The Oakville Copen Mound covers a quarter of an acre and rises 20 feet high. Every May, the Oakville Indian Mounds host a Multicultural Indian Festival featuring historic games, such as stickball and atlatl throwing, crafts, from flint-knapping to pottery making to hide tanning, and performances from drum groups and traditional dancers.

# Decatur Parks



## DELANO PARK

Sixth Avenue Southeast to Somerville Road and Prospect Drive to Gordon Drive.

[Delanopark.org](http://Delanopark.org)

Stop and smell the roses before jumping in the splash pad and playing on the playground at Delano Park, the oldest park in the city. The 28-acre park features a rose garden, splash pad, tennis courts, playground, trail of history and picnic shelter. Alabama's first licensed female architect, Carolyn Cortner Smith, designed the park's stone structure in the 1930s.



## RHODES FERRY PARK

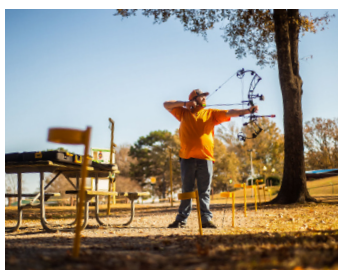
100 Market St. N.E.  
[Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

Set on the banks of the Tennessee River, Rhodes Ferry Park offers visitors a chance to play and learn. Along with the playground and pavilions, the park features historical markers about the Trail of Tears and Benson Field, Decatur's football stadium from 1931-47.



## FRAZIER PARK

309 Cherry St. N.E.  
[Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)  
Celebrating Decatur's Southern heritage and Japanese influences, the calm and serene Frazier Park includes a Japanese Tea Garden, a Southern garden, a fountain and small stream.



## ARCHERY PARK

2900 Point Mallard Circle S.E. [Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

Calling all Robin Hoods and Katniss Everdeens, this is the park for you. Archery Park includes a 20-target course, a 12-foot-high platform and targets ranging from 5 to 50 yards. Archers, 16 to 65, must have a valid hunting or heritage license.



## HOSPITALITY PARK

4799 U.S. 31 North  
[Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

A popular spot for anglers, Hospitality Park sits along the north side of the

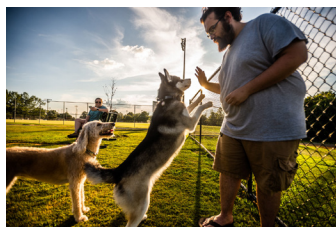
Tennessee River and also features a birding trail.



## AC BANKS PARK

705 McCartney St. NW  
[Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

With two playground areas, a baseball field and pavilions, AC Banks Park is a centerpiece of the northwest Decatur community, often host to gatherings and reunions.



## DECATUR DOG PARK

6372 Beltline Road SW  
[Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

Opened in May of 2019, the two-acre Decatur Dog Park offers an area for large dogs, 25 pounds and over, and one for small dogs, 25 pounds and under.



## ADVENTURE PARK

Beltline Road, between Central Parkway and Sandlin Road SE  
[Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

A wooden castle playground greets visitors to Adventure Park. The playground includes swings, slides, climbers and exercise stations. The park sits next to Wilson Morgan Park, which features tennis courts, softball fields, a soccer field and a walking trail.



## JACK ALLEN RECREATIONAL COMPLEX PLAYGROUND

2616 Modaus Road SW  
[Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

Housed at Decatur's premier soccer complex, the playground's highlights include a balance beam, ladder, rock wall, slides, climbers and more.



## PINES PARK

1612 Fifth St. NW  
[Decaturparks.com](http://Decaturparks.com)

With swings, slides, benches, picnic tables, multi-purpose court with bleachers and a one-half mile walking trail, Pines Park attracts visitors, young and old.



Hartselle Aquatic Center



Sparkman Park

# Hartselle Parks

## SPARKMAN PARK

1102 Main St. SW

Hartselle.org

A centerpiece of Hartselle, Sparkman Park features baseball and softball fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, a walking trail and sits next to the city's Aquatic Center and SNAP Playground for all children.

## HARTSELLE AQUATIC CENTER

406 Nanceford Road SW

Hartselle.org; admission charged

Open starting on Memorial Day weekend, the Hartselle Aquatic Center offers an escape from the summer heat with a pool, slides, diving boards, splash pad and lazy river.

## JOHN MARK STALLINGS

### S.N.A.P. PLAYGROUND

406 Nanceford Road SW

Hartselle.org

Named after the son of former University of Alabama football coach Gene Stallings, the John Mark Stallings S.N.A.P. Playground was built to be accessible by all children, specifically individuals with disabilities. Features include slides, climbing bars, musical instruments, a periscope, sensory panels, elevated sand pile, pulse tennis table, seesaw and more.

# Moulton Parks

## H.A. ALEXANDER PARK

13550 Court St.

H.A. Alexander Park, an entertainment staple of the Moulton community, features baseball fields, softball fields, tennis courts, walking track and playground

## MOULTON SPLASH PAD

Located next to H.A. Alexander Park, the splash pad, open Memorial Day to Labor Day, includes seven water features to entertain young children.

## ALEXANDER MINI PARK

Just south of the splash pad sits Alexander Mini Park. A celebration of nature, the 10-acre park features mature hardwoods, a creek and an amphitheater, where Moulton's Music in the Park concert series takes place.



Big Spring Park

# Athens Parks

## **BIG SPRING PARK**

350 Market St. East  
Athensalabama.us

Bring pieces of stale bread to feed the birds that gather at Big Spring Park's duck pond. The site also features a pavilion, playground and tennis court.

## **LINCOLN-BRIDGEFORTH PARK**

815 Westview Ave.  
Athensalabama.us

Get ready for a day of play at Lincoln-Bridgeforth Park. Perfect for a picnic, the park houses a basketball court, horseshoe pits, playground, kitchenette and pavilion.

## **SPORTSPLEX**

1401 U.S. 31 North  
Athensalabama.us

Set off to the side of U.S. 31 North, Athens' Sportsplex has a variety of activities, from disc golf and soccer to swimming and softball. The park also features an all-accessible playground and a 1.2-mile walking trail.

## **ATHENS GREENWAY TRAIL**

1403 U.S. 31 North  
Athensalabama.us

Escape into nature at the Athens Greenway Trail, a mostly shaded 2.3-mile trail that starts at Athens Sportsplex and winds down U.S. 72. Explorers will see a covered bridge, pastoral sites, wildflowers and, perhaps, a deer, heron and songbirds.



## W.C. HANDY MUSEUM

W.C. Handy became famous in the music world for his compositions such as “Memphis Blues” and “St. Louis Blues” and as a band conductor and author. He is heralded as the “Father of the Blues.” But before his famous life, he was born in a small log cabin in Florence on Nov. 16, 1873. The museum in his honor houses a collection of memorabilia, including his famous trumpet and his personal piano, as well as personal papers and original sheet music.

### **W.C. Handy Museum and Library**

620 W. College St., Florence

**Phone:** 256-760-6434

**Hours:** 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday

**Admission charged**

# Performing Arts



## **Dream Weavers Children's Theatre:**

Spurred by the Bank Street Players to reorganize, Dream Weavers Children's Theatre began offering acting experiences for young thespians and introducing newcomers to the stage in 2017. The casts, which number 100 and more, have staged "Charlotte's Web," "Beauty and the Beast, Jr.," "The Wizard of Oz" and "Frozen, Jr."



## **Bank Street Players:**

Since reforming in 2012, Bank Street has performed sold-out productions of "1776," "Fiddler on the Roof," "Oklahoma" and "Hairspray," brought plays to local coffee houses, schools and arts centers and premiered "Humbug!," a creation by local actor and playwright Chuck Puckett.



## **Orchestra Sul Ponticello:**

In 2014, Viljar Weimann created Decatur's first orchestra, Orchestra Sul Ponticello. In the past five years, the orchestra's members performed compositions by Bach, Mozart, Raid, Beethoven, Vivaldi, Verdi, Prokofiev and Handel and selections with singers, from "Barber of Seville" to "La Boheme."



## **Decatur Youth Symphony:**

Created in 1998 as a way to teach the violin to all third grade students in Decatur City Schools, the Decatur Youth Symphony expanded to include other string instruments and drum circles. The group performs a free winter and spring concert every year and is often a featured performer at Decatur's summer concert series Concerts by the River.



## **Footlights Community Theater:**

When Kristi Kargic moved back to north Alabama in January 2018, one of her first missions was to establish a performing arts group to expose children to theatre. In July of that year, the Athens-based Footlights Community Theater held its first production. The group stages original and popular productions



## **The Athenian Players:**

Headed by Hugh Long, The Athenian Players of Athens State staged productions ranging from Greek tragedies to Shakespearean comedies to modern dramas. The theater group's resume includes "Hamlet," "Sherlock Holmes," "Geek," "The Frogs" and "Verdigris." Playwright Jim Beaver, an actor known for his roles as Bobby Singer in "Supernatural," Whitney Ellsworth in "Deadwood" and Sheriff Shelby Parlow in "Justified," attended a performance of The Athenian Players' "Verdigris."



### College Street Players:

The Hartselle community theater group appeals to both youth and experienced actors. The group's offerings range from "The Lion King, Jr." and "Mr. Popper's Penguins" to "Into the Woods" and "Legend of Sleepy Hollow."



### Curtain & Lights Theater Company:

Based out of First Baptist Church in Decatur, the Curtain & Lights Theater Company, headed by Heather Anderson, stages two shows a year. Past shows include "Charlie Brown Christmas," "It's a Wonderful Life" and "Annie Get Your Gun."



### Calhoun Theatre Department:

Headed by longtime Calhoun Community College faculty members Bill Provin and Bubba Godsey, the Calhoun Theatre Department, along with The Athenian Players, calls the Black Box Theater at the Alabama Center for the Arts in downtown Decatur home. The theater group has staged "Doubt," "The Diviners," "The 25th annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," "The Comedy of Errors: A Pop Musical," "Romeo and Juliet" and more.

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## ALABAMA MUSIC HALL OF FAME

This is the place to learn the rich history of music in Alabama, and especially the renowned Shoals music scene. Exhibits include a 12-foot jukebox, a wax figure of Nat King Cole, recording equipment used in Sam Phillips' Memphis Music Service, apparel and instruments from many artists.

**Alabama Music Hall of Fame**  
617 U.S. 72 W., Tusculumbia

**Phone:** 256-381-4417

**Website:** [alamhof.org](http://alamhof.org)

**Hours:** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday

**Admission charged**



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# COOK MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

## THE LASAGNA LIZARD

New \$32.4 million Cook Museum's exhibit on threatened hellbender salamander teaches about life  
Story by Catherine Godbey

### Cook Museum of Natural Science

**Phone:** 256-351-4505

**Website:** [cookmuseum.org](http://cookmuseum.org)

**Hours:** Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Closed on Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

**Admission:** Prices range from \$15 to \$20, with discounts for groups

Peering through the tank's glass wall, Cassandra Elias scanned the stacked rocks for any movement.

"There's a tail and there's another tail," the live animal manager at the Cook Museum of Natural Science said excitedly, pointing at the bottom of the tank. "And over in the corner is the face. They are so ugly, but also super cool."

Triggering Elias' excitement were flat, blotchy brown, slimy, beady-eyed amphibians that spend most of their life under rocks.

Meet the hellbender — also nicknamed the snot otter, lasagna lizard, mud puppy and Allegheny alligator.

"These guys are crazy," said Scott Mayo, director of the Cook Museum. "They are one

of the largest salamanders in north Alabama. The size is really amazing. When you think of an amphibian, you think small, you think tree frogs. These guys can grow over two feet long. As cool as that is, there's a touch of sadness because there are so few of them left."

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species classifies the hellbender as near threatened.

Due to their decreased numbers and their elusiveness — living beneath rocks, blending into their environments and hunting at night — scientists previously thought hellbenders no longer existed in Alabama. But, thanks to 21st century science, tests of water samples from Alabama creeks and streams revealed environmental DNA, including mucus, skin and feces, from hellbenders.

Those tests served as a map for teams of scientists, including Jim Godwin, an aquatic zoologist with the Auburn University Museum of Natural History's Alabama Natural Heritage Program. Teams led by Godwin found an Eastern hellbender in the Flint River in 2015 and one in a creek south of Montgomery in 2016.

"Most amphibians aren't on the conservation status, despite the fact they

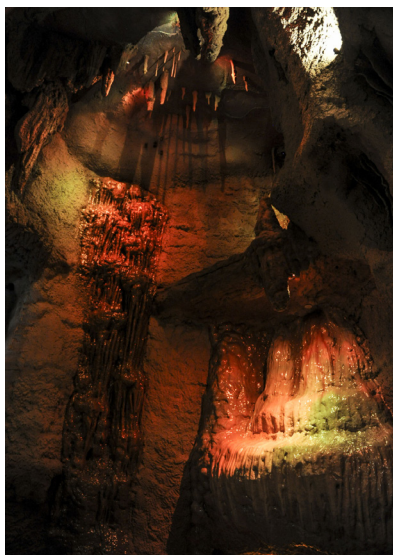
should be," Elias said. "Their numbers have gone down dramatically in the last 50 years. Hellbenders were just recently found again in Alabama."

Mayo described the hellbenders as an indicator species.

"They are the canary in the coal mines for the wetlands, because they breathe through their skin, so anything in the water also gets in them," Mayo said.

Researchers and scientists attributed the dwindling numbers of hellbenders to decreased water quality due to an increase of pollutants and silt caused by construction, dams and farming.

"Being an amphibian, they need really good water quality," Elias said. "Their habitat is being taken away. The cool flowing streams in Alabama they call home are a little bit warmer than they used to be."



Mayo elaborated: "If something happens to the stream or creek they are living in, it's done. They don't get to pack up and go to another one that fits them better."

To increase the public's knowledge of hellbenders and their precarious future, the Cook Museum applied for a permit to house the amphibians.

In October 2019, the museum received three Eastern hellbenders from the Fort Worth Zoo in Texas. Two subspecies of hellbenders exist — the Ozark hellbender, found in Arkansas and Missouri, and the Eastern hellbender, found in high-flowing cold streams from Alabama to New York.

After examining them to ensure they were acting properly and eating a steady diet of shrimp, krill, mice, minnows and blood worms, the museum placed two of the three hellbenders on display Jan. 7.

"Once they got in there, they were gone because that's what they want to do," Mayo said. "We spent three weeks in the terrarium wiggling the rocks around so that the hellbenders felt

comfortable and people could still see them."

The hellbenders fit perfectly into the museum's motto "Life is amazing."

Opened on June 7, 2019, the 62,000- square-foot museum at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Lee Street in downtown Decatur features exhibits with more than 60,000 bees, a multitude of bugs, 260 other animals and seven aquatic tanks, including a 15,000-gallon saltwater tank.

The \$32.4 million high-tech facility with interactive displays is centered around exhibits on rocks, minerals and weather patterns, oceans, space, caves, rivers and streams, arctic, dessert and insects.

Highlights include an interactive kinetic sand table, a climbable tree and an explorable cave.

The museum at 133 Fourth Ave. N.E. is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Friday; 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday; and noon-5 p.m., Sunday. Admission is \$20 for adults, \$17 for ages 65 and older and military, \$15 for ages 3 to 14 and free for children 2 and younger. [Cookmuseum.org](http://Cookmuseum.org).



# Celebrate with us!

From festivals celebrating barbecue, Japanese culture, hot-air balloons and endangered birds to parades featuring pirate ships and jazz bands to street parties with classic cars, music and art, events across the Tennessee Valley annually entertain lovers of food, music, nature, history and more.

FESTIVALS



## ALABAMA JUBILEE

Dozens of hot air balloons take to the air above Decatur during the Alabama Jubilee Hot Air Balloon Classic on the Saturday and Sunday of Memorial Day weekend.

The free two-day festival features a Hare and Hound Race, key grab, balloon glow, tethered rides, antique tractor display, car show, arts and crafts, live music and fireworks. The balloons will take to the sky for the 43rd annual festival on May 23-24 this year. Admission is free.



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FESTIVALS



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## CARNEGIE CARNIVAL

Held the Saturday before Fat Tuesday, the Carnegie Carnival — Decatur's Mardi Gras celebration — brings parades, music and art to downtown.

Festivities include floats decorated as pirate ships and speakeasies, costumed canines, jazz bands and participants throwing beads and MoonPies. The daylong event has a children's parade, dog parade and the main parade, a 5K run, bluegrass music and an arts creation station.

Leading up to Carnegie Carnival, nominees for Carnegie Carnival king, queen, prince, princess, sir bow-wow and lady barks-a-lot hold fundraising events, from a drag queen bingo to a litter cleanup to mystery dinners. The 2020 Carnegie Carnival raised \$253,000. [Carnegiecarnival.org](https://carnegiecarnival.org). Admission is free.



## 3RD FRIDAY

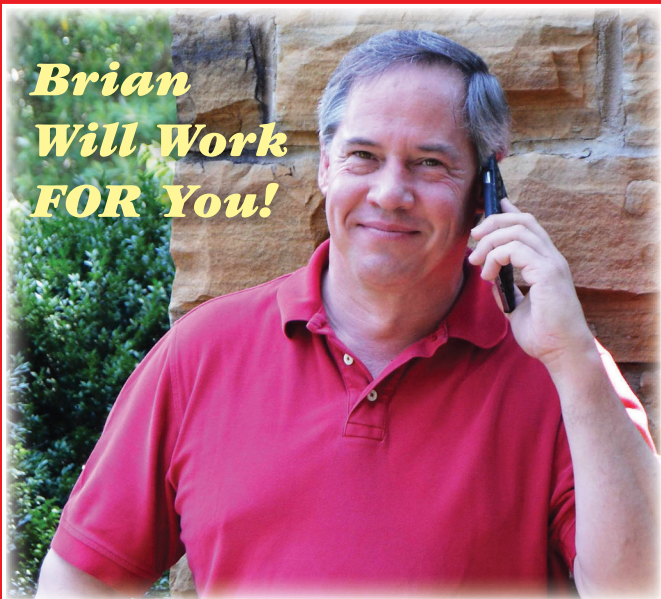
Every third Friday of the month, from April to October, downtown Decatur transforms into a street festival with classic cars, musicians, line dancers, acrobats and artists. Started in 2009 as a way to attract people to downtown, 3rd Friday now brings in hundreds of visitors every month.



# DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

More than 1,000 paddlers compete in the Dragon Boat Festival at Point Mallard Park every year. The event, which raises money for the Decatur Morgan Hospital Foundation, attracts teams from area high schools, gyms, churches and businesses. An opening ceremony kicks off the races and features the dotting of the dragon's eye and a performance by the Daikin drummers. The races typically take place the Saturday before Mother's Day. Admission is free.

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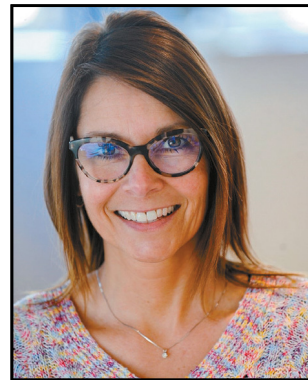
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## DAIKIN FESTIVAL

With happi coats, traditional music, kimonos, taiko drummers and yakisoba, the Daikin Festival celebrates Japanese culture. Described as a gift to the community, the festival provides guests with free admission, free food, free music, free happi coats and free tethered hot-air balloon rides, weather permitting. The festival typically is held in May, at Point Mallard Park. Admission is free.





## SPIRIT OF AMERICA

Fireworks light up the sky above Point Mallard Park in celebration of the Fourth of July. The free celebration also includes a children's bike parade, a golf tournament and the recognition of community servants and patriotic individuals. Admission is free.



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Decatur Morgan Hospital is a full service community hospital located in Morgan County in the city of Decatur. With four campuses, Decatur Morgan Hospital serves Decatur, Hartselle, Priceville and surrounding communities. Our mission is to provide quality care that improves the health of those we serve.



[www.decaturmorganhospital.net](http://www.decaturmorganhospital.net)



## 2020 FOUNDATION EVENTS

All proceeds will be used to fund much needed equipment and services for Decatur Morgan Hospital. Please plan to participate and make an IMPACT on our community!



**SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2020**  
Point Mallard Aquatic Center



**SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 2020**  
Burningtree Country Club



**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020**  
Ingalls Harbor Pavilion



**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2020**  
Founder's Park Amphitheater



**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2020**  
Ingalls Harbor Pavilion

For event details go on line at [www.decaturmorganfoundation.org](http://www.decaturmorganfoundation.org)



## RIVER CLAY FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

Named for the material used to construct some of Decatur's oldest structures, the River Clay Fine Arts Festival features more than 70 sculptors, painters, photographers, jewelers and carvers creating art from wood, fiber, clay, oil, glass and stone.

Along with artists, the two-day festival held on Decatur's City Hall lawn showcases music, children's activities, student art exhibits and artist demonstrations. This year's festival will be Oct. 17-18. [Riverclay.org](http://Riverclay.org). Admission charged.



## FIDDLERS CONVENTION

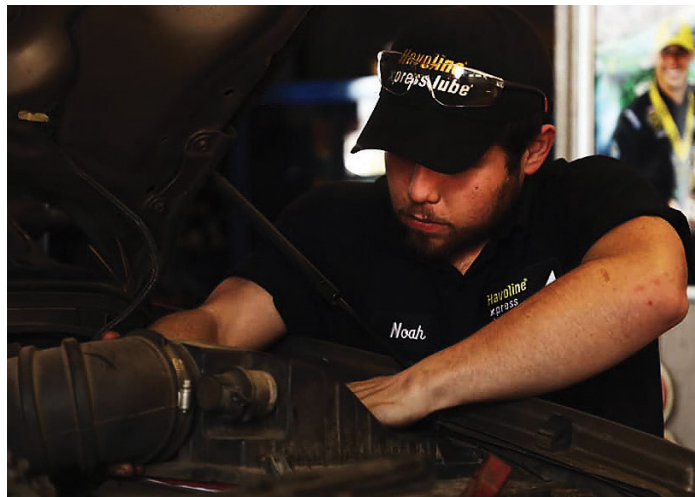
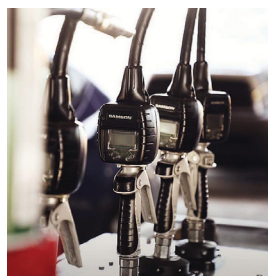
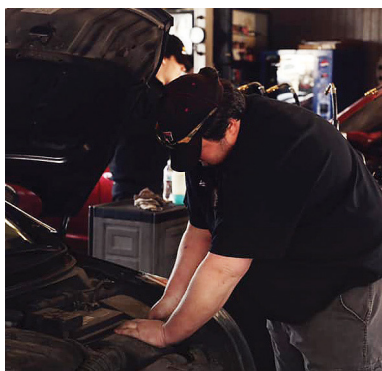
Nicknamed the “Granddaddy of Midsouth Fiddlers Conventions,” the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention attracts more than 15,000 music lovers and 200 musicians from 30 states to Athens State University every year.

The three-day convention with competitions in buck dance, banjo, fiddle and old-time singing, culminates with a “fiddle off” between the junior, intermediate and senior division fiddle winners. The 2020 convention is Oct. 1-3. [Tvotfc.org](http://Tvotfc.org). Admission charged.

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## FESTIVAL OF THE CRANES

The call of the wild — literally, the sound of thousands of cranes — lures visitors to the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Decatur for Festival of the Cranes every January. Created in celebration of the more than 10,000 sandhill cranes and the endangered whooping cranes that winter in north Alabama, the festival features music, art, puppetry, birding walks and more. The whooping cranes started wintering at Wheeler in 2004.

“Nowhere else in the country can you walk 200 yards to a heated building with scopes and view the tallest and one of the most endangered birds in north America,” Teresa Adams, supervisory park ranger at Wheeler, said of the refuge visitor center's observation building. “This truly is a special place and a special experience.”

More than 5,000 people attend the free festival each year. [fws.gov/refuge/wheeler](http://fws.gov/refuge/wheeler). Admission is free.



## ATHENS STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

Weaving together folk legends, tall tales and exaggerated truths, award-winning tellers entertain audiences from across north Alabama during the Athens Storytelling Festival.

Along with the professional storytellers, the festival, held on the square in Athens in October, features a competition for amateur storytellers. [Athensstorytellingfestival.com](http://Athensstorytellingfestival.com).

Admission charged.



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## MULTICULTURAL INDIAN FESTIVAL

Held at Oakville Indian Mounds in Lawrence County in May, the Multicultural Indian Festival celebrates the history and heritage of the Native American tribes that called north Alabama home.

Guests learn about games, flint-knapping, pottery making, blacksmithing, hide tanning and more. Performers typically include drum groups, flute musicians and traditional dancers. Children's activities include necklace making, atlatl throwing and stickball games. [Oakvilleindianmounds.com](http://Oakvilleindianmounds.com). Parking charged.



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## RACKING HORSE WORLD CELEBRATION

Dozens of the country's top racking horses vie for the title of world champion at the annual Racking Horse Breeders Association of America's World Celebration in Priceville each September.

Under the guidance of children, adults, professionals and amateurs, horses compete in more than 180 classes. Other activities during the nine-day competition include a horse sale, barn decorating contest and stick horse race for children. [Rackinghorse.org](http://Rackinghorse.org).



## RIVERFEST BBQ & MUSIC FESTIVAL

Riverfest, the second oldest barbecue competition in Alabama, celebrates two of north Alabamians' loves — music and food.

The two-day festival, scheduled for Sept. 11-12, attracts dozens of professional and backyard barbecue teams to Decatur, along with local musicians. Along with music and barbecue, the festival features a children's area, carnival games and more. Proceeds benefit Mosaic Mentoring of North Alabama. [Mosaicnorthal.org](http://Mosaicnorthal.org). Admission charged.





## BATTLE FOR DECATUR

More than 200 reenactors gather in Decatur on Labor Day weekend to bring to life the Battle for Decatur. The two-day event held at Point Mallard commemorates the four-day encounter between the North and the South in October 1864.

Activities include mock battles, a Ladies' Tea, a military ball, a church service and Civil War camps with authentic equipment and dress. Admission is free.



## Other Celebrations & Festivals



### Racking Horse Spring Celebration:

Dozens of horses compete for the title of grand champion at the Spring Celebration every April. The four-day competition takes place at the Morgan County Celebration Arena. [Rackinghorse.org](http://Rackinghorse.org).



### Kiddie Carnival:

A staple of summertime in Athens, the Kiddie Carnival features rides, from a roller coaster to swings to a Ferris wheel, and games for children. Open Thursday-Saturday during the summer, proceeds from the 50-cent per ride event go to the Athens Lions Club outreach programs. [e-clubhouse.org/sites/athensal](http://e-clubhouse.org/sites/athensal)



### Celebrating Early Old Town with Art:

Watercolor paintings by Decatur artist Frances D. Tate offer viewers a peek into one of the city's oldest neighborhoods, Old Town. An exhibit of Tate's work takes place every Fall.

[Oldtowndecaturn.com](http://Oldtowndecaturn.com).



### Eva Frontier Days:

A down-home celebration, complete with greased pig-catching, frog jumping and pig-calling skills, highlights the Eva Frontier Days in Eva every year. The weeklong community celebration in September includes a parade, antique tractors, car show, crafts, baking contest, hayride, community singing and music.

SOMEDAY I WILL...  
*Today I Did!*

Meet Drew Holmes, who attended Decatur Heritage Christian Academy from sixth grade until graduation in 2007. After high school, he attended the University of Alabama in Huntsville from which he graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. He then went on to earn a Doctorate of Pharmacy from the University of Tennessee and was named the Most Outstanding Student Pharmacist in his class. Currently, Drew is a Pharmacy Administration Resident at the University of Kansas Health System in Kansas City. Upon completion of his residency, Drew will graduate with a Master of Science in Health System Pharmacy Administration.

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## Other Celebrations & Festivals



### Helen Keller Festival:

The weeklong celebration of the life and accomplishments of Helen Keller includes music, family bike rides, runs, a car and truck show, golf tournaments, arts and crafts, parade and performances of “The Miracle Worker.” The festival takes place at Spring Park in Tuscumbia, which is near Keller’s Ivy Green birthplace. [Helenkellerfestival.com](http://Helenkellerfestival.com).



### Piney Chapel American Farm Heritage Days:

Combine antique tractors, cars and trucks with gasoline and steam engines, horse-drawn equipment and competitions for the annual Farm Heritage Days celebration in Athens in August. Activities include a parade of power, slow races, ladies’ skillet throw, kids’ pedal pull, wheat threshing exhibit, entertainment and more.



### Hartselle Depot Days:

A tribute to the railroad industry, Hartselle Depot Days, with music, a truck and motorcycle show, arts, crafts and games, attracts more than 19,000 people to downtown Hartselle every September. [Hartsellechamber.com](http://Hartsellechamber.com).



### Concerts by the River:

A staple of Decatur’s summer, Concerts by the River is an outdoor concert series held on Mondays from May to August. The music ranges from classical to country to jazz. Concerts take place at Rhodes Ferry Park and Founders Park.



### W.C. Handy Music Festival:

The 10-day music extravaganza honors W.C. Handy, Father of the Blues. Bands come from all over to perform in every nook and cranny in Florence. [Wchandymusicfestival.com](http://Wchandymusicfestival.com).

### Holiday Parades:

More than a dozen parades, including one on the water, bring the Christmas spirit to Morgan, Lawrence and Limestone counties every year. The parades in Decatur, Hartselle, Priceville, Athens, Courtland, Moulton, Trinity, Mount Hope, Elkmont, Hatton, Ardmore, Hillsboro and Town Creek feature marching bands, floats, Santa and more. In the Parade of Lights, boats adorned with Christmas lights and decorations float down the Tennessee River between Riverwalk Marina and Rhodes Ferry Park in Decatur.



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From colorful, blooming flowers in the spring to lush green trees in the summer to reds, oranges and yellows of leaves in the fall to the sight of endangered birds in the winter, north Alabama offers experiences for nature lovers throughout the year.

For outdoor adventures, check out these forests, creeks, tree-lined paths and waterfalls in Morgan, Lawrence and Limestone counties.

# WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Established in 1938 as a home for waterfowl, migratory birds and other wildlife, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge offers an escape into nature. Covering 34,500 acres, the refuge, which serves as home to 115 fish species, 74 species of reptiles and amphibians, 47 mammal species and 288 species of songbirds, attracts bird watchers, hikers, bicyclists, anglers and more. Since 2004, endangered whooping cranes have wintered at the refuge. The appearance of the whoopers spurred the refuge to create the Festival of Cranes, a two-day event in January that attracts thousands of visitors.

Teresa Adams, a supervisory ranger with four decades of experience at the refuge, describes the more than 34,000 acres of Wheeler as the “hidden gem” of Decatur.

Every spring she directs visitors to the flowering dogwoods outside the visitors’ center. In the fall, she recommends exploring Truck Trail bordered by stately hickory and oak trees along the Tennessee River. In the winter, she points guests down the path to the observation building, where waterfowl and wading birds, including thousands of sandhill cranes and more than a dozen endangered whooping cranes, gather.

**The Truck Trail** is accessible at the end of Old River Road Southeast. While the majority of refuge roads are closed to car traffic, hikers and bicyclists can still access the paths.

**Atkeson Cypress Trail:** The half-mile trail accessible at the visitor center snakes through a cypress swamp and wooded area.

**Flint Creek Trail:** With a canopy of maples, poplars and sweetgums, the 1½-mile Flint Creek Trail north of Alabama 67 offers a prime viewing spot for chipmunks, squirrels, woodpeckers, wrens, northern cardinals and warblers.

## **Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Visitors’ Center**

3121 Visitor Center Road off Alabama 67, Decatur

**Phone:** 256-350-6639

**Website:** [fws.gov/refuge/wheeler/](https://fws.gov/refuge/wheeler/)

**Hours:** 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday to Saturday

**Free Admission**

**Where: Morgan County | Cost: Free**

For more trail recommendations, stop by the visitor center for a hiking and biking brochure.



## BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST

An outdoor playground for nature enthusiasts, Bankhead National Forest covers 181,230 acres in Lawrence, Winston and Franklin counties, offering trails to hike, waterfalls to visit, caves to explore and creeks to paddle.

“Sometimes you’ve just got to stop and look up. We are here to appreciate this beautiful place,” said Janice Barrett with Wild South, an environmental conservation organization. “There are so many special things to see.”

If hiking with children, Barrett recommended visiting the Sipsey Wilderness trail, which features waterfalls and sandstone bluffs, the wheelchair-accessible Brushy Lake trail with views of the lake and wildflowers, or Caney Creek Falls, a two-mile round-trip that ends at a waterfall. For views of canyons and waterfalls, hike the 4.8-mile

Borden Creek trail. Alabama Mountain Lakes included Kinlock Falls in the Bankhead and Turkey Foot Falls near the Sipsey River picnic grounds on its “Magical Waterfalls of North Alabama” list. [northalabama.org/trails/waterfalls](http://northalabama.org/trails/waterfalls). During the summer, Wild South leads family-friendly hikes on Wednesdays.

“It is so important to expose children to the outdoors and get them to explore and appreciate nature. They are our next generations of conservationists. The only way for them to learn about the outdoors is to get out there in it,” Barrett said. “The more we understand, value and cherish these wild places, the harder we will fight to protect them.” For more trail recommendations, visit the Wild South office, 552 Lawrence St., Moulton.

**Where:** Lawrence County | **Cost:** Free in most areas, \$3 per car at Brushy Lake and Sispey recreation areas



# WONDERS OF WATER

**Where: Morgan, Limestone, Lawrence and Walker counties | Cost: Free**

Going by the moniker “Southern Paddler” on Facebook, Decatur’s Dan Truitt explores the wonders of north Alabama’s nature by kayak.

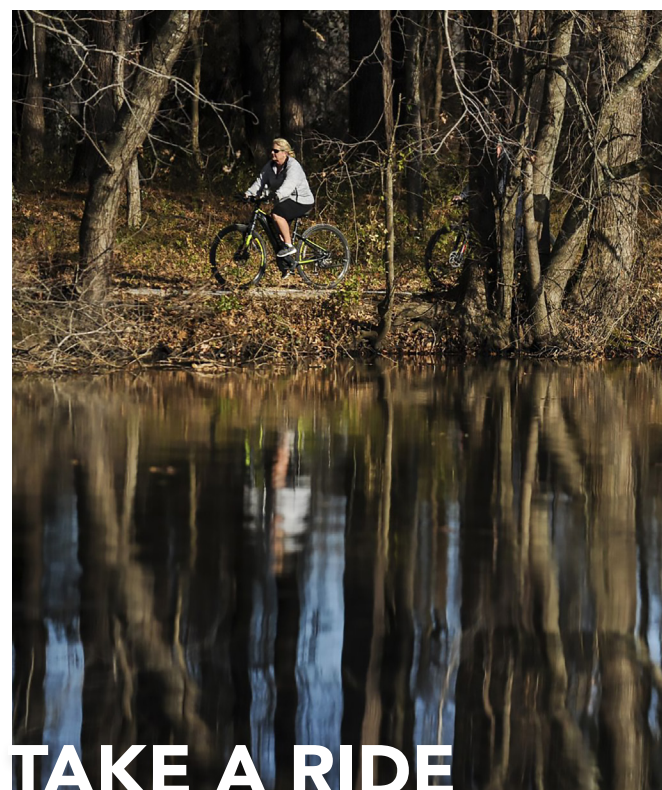
In Morgan County, Truitt recommended Flint Creek, accessible at the U.S. 31 boat ramp near Hartselle, at Osprey Point on Alabama 67, off Old River Road or Bethel Road, and Cotaco Creek, accessible at the boat ramp on Sharp Ford Road in Somerville.

In Limestone County, Limestone Bay, accessible off Arrowhead Landing Ramp in Mooresville, offers views of birds, including geese and the occasional bald eagle, and

deer in the late fall. Also explore the Alabama portion of the Elk River, which winds 22 miles from Veto, Tennessee, at the state line to Elk River Mills Road in Athens.

Aided by the Elk River’s downstream current, kayakers and canoers can relax and enjoy the scenery along the Limestone County waterway. For uninterrupted views of the tree line, paddle the 10-mile section from Veto to Easter Ferry Road.

Other recommendations include the Tennessee River from Lake Guntersville to Wheeler Lake, Sipsey River and Brushy Creek in Bankhead Forest, the Sipsey Fork River in Walker County and the Flint River in Madison County.



**Where: Decatur and Athens | Cost: Free**

Explore north Alabama’s natural wonders on two wheels while navigating bicycle trails at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Bankhead, the Dr. Bill Sims Bike Trail and Richard Martin Rails-to-Trails.

The almost 15-mile Bill Sims Bike Trail winds through Decatur, linking Point Mallard to Wilson Morgan Park via Rhodes Ferry Park and downtown Decatur.

A popular family friendly spot for bikers and horseback riders, the 11-mile Richard Martin Rails-to-Trails connects Piney Chapel to Veto in Limestone County and features covered bridges, a refurbished railcar, waterways, wetlands and a Civil War battle site. The relatively flat trail accommodates strollers and wheelchairs.

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# BIG BOB GIBSON BAR-B-Q

## Fame of Big Bob Gibson's barbecue, white sauce spreads nationally

Story by Catherine Godbey

It started simply 95 years ago in the backyard of railroad worker Bob Gibson. From his hand-dug pit, Gibson, nicknamed “Big Bob” for his 6-foot-4-inch and 300-pound frame, served slow-roasted barbecue to neighbors and friends.

Soon, word of Big Bob and his unique tangy white sauce spread.

Now, nine decades and five generations later, the legacy of Big Bob Gibson's BBQ, a culinary staple of Decatur, the entire state of Alabama and the United States, continues to spread.

Led by Chris Lilly, who married Gibson's great-granddaughter, Big Bob Gibson's BBQ has appeared on the Food Network, earned 15 World BBQ Championships, five Memphis in May grand championships and participated in the South Beach Food & Wine Festival, NASCAR events, New York City's Big Apple Barbecue Party and Aspen Food & Wine Festival.

While Big Bob Gibson's influence has spread, the restaurant's anchor — the food — has remained the same.

“Pretty much everything is the same as when my grandfather made it,” Gibson's grandson Don McLemore said. “We have added items, but we haven't messed with the sauce.”

That signature white sauce created by Gibson formed the foundation for the award-winning barbecue joint. Each generation since has built upon that foundation. With the second generation came the arrival of chocolate, lemon and coconut pies. The third generation added the barbecue stuffed potatoes. And, under Lilly, came the selling of the white sauce at grocery stores and the organization of a competition team.

For their contributions to the culinary world, Lilly was inducted into the American Royal World Series of Barbecue's Hall of Fame in 2016 and McLemore received the Pioneer of Barbecue award from Jack Daniel's World Championship Barbecue in 2015.

For a taste of Big Bob Gibson's, stop by 1715 Sixth Ave. S.E. or 2520 Danville Road S.W.



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## TIME TO EAT



50 restaurants in the Decatur area that'll satisfy any craving

### FAMILY

#### C.F. PENN HAMBURGERS

Where: 214 Sixth Ave. S.E., Decatur  
Hours: 9 a.m.- 6 p.m. (or until they run out) Monday - Saturday

C. F. Penn's Hamburgers is an iconic restaurant that touts deep-fried burgers that even the King loved. Yes, that King – Elvis Presley. C. F. Penn Hamburgers has been featured on Food Network. They've been serving up burgers since 1927. Try their famous Slugburger.

#### CHICK-FIL-A

Where: 2502 U.S. 31 S., Decatur, 256-822-1014; 1809 Beltline Road S.W., Decatur, 256-355-3035; and 1291 U.S. 72 E., Athens, 256-233-8900; [chick-fil-a.com](http://chick-fil-a.com)  
Hours: 6 a.m.- 9 p.m. Monday – Thursday; 6 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday & Saturday

Chick-fil-A offers all things chicken – from sandwiches and tenders to fresh-made salads. There are two locations in Decatur as well as a location in Athens. You might also like to stop in for a frosted lemonade, made fresh each day.

#### CROSSROADS STEAK & GRILL

Where: 5828 Alabama 36 W., Danville, 256-751-2722  
Hours: 10:30 a.m.- 8:30 p.m. Tuesday – Thursday; 10:30 a.m.- 9 p.m. Friday & Saturday; 10:30 a.m.- 8:30 p.m. Sunday

Crossroads Steak & Grill is a family-owned restaurant offering local favorites like fried catfish, shrimp and of course steak! This cozy restaurant does not accept “plastic,” so bring cash and enjoy a great meal.

#### DOWNTOWN DAWGS

Where: 1820 Sixth Ave. S.E., Suite C, Decatur, 256-345-3796; [downtowndawgsdecatur.com](http://downtowndawgsdecatur.com)  
Hours: 11 a.m.- 6 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday – Saturday; 11 a.m.- 5 p.m. Wednesdays

Everyone loves a classic hot dog, and Downtown Dawgs takes them

to a new level. From the Cool Rancher with nacho cheese and crushed cool ranch chips to the Mac Daddy with Mac-&-cheese, there's something for everyone to choose from.

#### THE FREIGHT HOUSE

Where: 200 Railroad St. S.W., Hartselle, 256-773-4600; [freighthousehartselle.com](http://freighthousehartselle.com)  
Hours: 11 a.m.- 2 p.m. Sunday – Wednesday; 11 a.m.- 8 p.m. Thursday; 11 a.m.- 9 p.m. Friday & Saturday

The Freight House is located in the historic, 1915 L&N railroad freight depot and offers classic Southern cooking at its finest. You will find classics from hand-cut prime rib to slow-cooked pinto beans. Enjoy a great meal, followed by a slice of their famous strawberry cake, as you watch the trains roll by right outside the windows.

#### JW STEAKHOUSE

Where: 45 Marco Drive, Priceville, 256-355-5560; [jwsteakhouse.com](http://jwsteakhouse.com)  
Hours: 4 p.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday – Thursday; 4 p.m.-10 p.m. Friday; 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday

JW Steakhouse is conveniently located just off of I-65 in the Priceville area. JW Steakhouse offers hand-cut, aged steaks, homemade cheesecake and much more. They have a new bar with a wide selection of beers and wines. They offer catering and event hosting, as well as monthly wine tasting events.

#### LIBBY'S CATFISH & DINER

Where: 1401 Alabama 67 S., Priceville, 256-353-9767  
Hours: 6 a.m.- 8 p.m. Monday – Wednesday; 6 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Thursday – Saturday; 10:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. Sunday

If you have a craving for catfish, that is what Libby's is best known for. But in addition to catfish and seafood with homemade tartar sauce, you can also find steaks, burgers and a variety of country style breakfast sandwiches.



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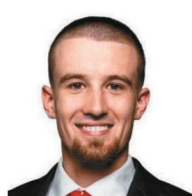
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TIME TO EAT

337866-1

## MR. HENRY'S NEIGHBORHOOD RESTAURANT

Where: 701 Nance Ford Road  
S.W., Hartselle, 256-773-8101;  
misterhenrys.net  
Hours: 5:30 a.m.- 8 p.m. Monday-  
Tuesday & Thursday-Friday; 7  
a.m.- 11 a.m. Saturday; 10 a.m.- 2  
p.m. Sunday

Mr. Henry's is a beloved  
restaurant in Hartselle, offering  
home-style cooking such as ribeye  
steaks or meatloaf sandwiches  
and daily specials. With their early  
hours, it is a favorite go-to location  
for a hearty breakfast as well.

## NATURE'S TABLE

Where: 133 Fourth Ave. N.E.,  
Decatur – inside the Cook  
Museum of Natural Science,  
256-898-6301; cookmuseum.  
naturestable.com  
Hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday  
– Friday; 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday;  
noon-5 p.m. Sunday

Nature's Table, located inside  
the Cook Museum, offers a blend  
of healthy traditional and new  
foods with fresh ingredients.  
You'll find Acai bowls, smoothies,

sandwiches, protein bowls and  
more.

## THE OLD COOKSTOVE

Where: 89 Reeder Road, Danville,  
256-462-1151; oldcookstove.com  
Hours: 4 a.m.-7p.m. Friday; 11  
a.m.-7 p.m. Friday & Saturday

This off-the-beaten-path  
restaurant is a rustic little gem  
nestled in the countryside of  
Danville. The Old Cookstove is  
known for hosting a "Seafood  
Friday" and serving homemade  
dishes just like your grandma  
used to make. Take a drive in the  
country, enjoy the scenery and  
stop in for a meal of comfort foods  
like country fried steak or pot roast  
and maybe some peach cobbler  
with homemade ice cream.

## RO'S GRILLE

Where: 300 E. Hobbs St., Athens,  
256-230-2716; rosgrille.com  
Hours: 10:30 a.m.- 8 p.m. Tuesday  
– Thursday; 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m.  
Friday & Saturday; 10:30 a.m.- 3  
p.m. Sunday

Ro's Grille is a casual restaurant  
featuring a twist on traditional  
grilled foods. You'll find Caribbean  
chicken, ribeye, Cajun salmon,

9-ounce burgers and more to  
choose from. The restaurant also  
offers daily specials.

## SMITH'S SEAFOOD COMPANY

Where: 1102 U.S. 72 East, Athens,  
256-998-5078; smithsseafood.com  
Hours: 11 a.m.- 7 pm Tuesday –  
Saturday

When it comes to seafood, there's  
no place like Smith's Seafood  
Company. You'll find Louisiana-  
style cooking, loaded shrimp fries,  
catfish, and even gator bites. Stop  
for some fresh seafood take-out.  
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seafood market.

## WESTSIDE CAFÉ

Where: 2699 Sandlin Road, Suite  
B5, Decatur, 256-353-2025;  
westsidecoffeepace.com  
Hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday –  
Friday

Westside Café has been serving  
homemade soups, salads and  
sandwiches since 2001. They also  
offer hot daily specials and whole  
frozen casseroles to go.



# FINE DINING

## SIMP MCGHEE'S

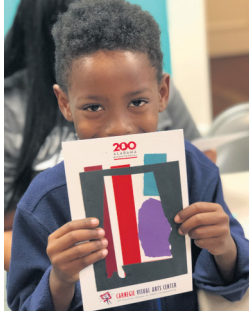
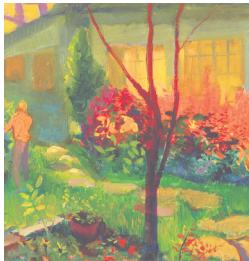
Where: 725 Bank St. N.E., Decatur, 256-353-6284;  
 simpmcghees.com  
 Hours: 5 p.m.-9 p.m. Monday – Thursday; 5 p.m.-9:30 p.m.,  
 Friday-Saturday

Located on historic Bank Street, Simp McGhee's serves up a variety of Cajun offerings such as crawfish egg rolls, crab Florentine, lobster ravioli and Rhodes Ferry duck. If the weather is nice, you can take advantage of their pet-friendly outdoor seating as well.

## STEAKDOWN STREET

Where: 107 Second Ave. N.E. Decatur, 256-686-1637;  
 steakdownstreet.com  
 Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Tuesday - Saturday

Steakdown Street opened its doors in October 2019 in downtown Decatur and offers a variety of dishes with a steakhouse flair. On the menu, you'll find everything from Wagyu sliders and "Pigpen and Friends" to Steak Frites or their Shrimp of Fools wrap.



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## BARBECUE

### BIG BOB GIBSON BAR-B-Q

Where: 117 Sixth Ave. S.E. and 2520 Danville Road S.W., Decatur, 256-350-6969; bigbobgibson.com  
Hours: The Sixth Avenue location is open 9:30 a.m.-8:15 p.m. daily, and the drive-thru remains open until 8:30 p.m. The Danville Road location is closed on Sunday but is open 9:30 a.m. – 8:15 p.m. Monday – Saturday, with the drive-thru open until 8:30 p.m.

When you walk into the original location on Sixth Avenue in Decatur, you'll see many of the trophies that Big Bob Gibson's award-winning barbecue has earned. Big Bob Gibson has been serving up barbecue since 1925 and has been featured on Food Network, the Travel Channel and more. Their food is described as "quintessential Alabama Southern cooking."

### CHIEF AND SNOOGIE'S HICKORY PIT

Where: 23419 Highway 24, Trinity, 256-351-9904; chiefandsnoogiebbq.com  
Hours: 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday – Saturday; 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday

Stop in for barbecue at Chief and Snoogies in Trinity. With freshly made pork, turkey, ribs and more that are smoked daily, you'll find lots to choose from. Try their BBQ Nachos and grab a dessert while you're at it.

### HOLY SMOKE BBQ

Where: 900 Highway 31 N.W., Hartselle, 256-751-2000  
Hours: 10:30 a.m.-8 p.m., Tuesday – Saturday

Holy Smoke is a small, family-owned BBQ restaurant that is dedicated to cooking fresh foods daily, the old-fashioned way. They are best known for their smoked chicken wings and barbecued ribs, but you can also get juicy pulled pork and deliciously smoked beef brisket, and all the homemade sides you could imagine.

### LAWLERS BBQ

Where: 725 Beltline Road S.W., Suite A, Decatur, 256-822-1006;  
And 1506 U.S. 72 E., Athens, 256-233-1818; lawlersbarbecue.com  
Hours: 10:30 a.m.-8 p.m., Monday – Saturday

LawLers BBQ was started by two brothers from Athens. LawLers uses old-fashioned recipes and every bit of the hickory-smoked, pulled pork is still picked by hand. You can get barbecue by the pound, St. Louis-style ribs, or maybe try a "stuffie" – a baked potato stuffed with cheese and your choice of barbecue meat.

### SCRUGG'S BBQ

Where: 1315 Highway 20, Decatur, 256-351-7937; scruggsbbqdecatur.com  
Hours: 11 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday – Saturday; 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday  
Located near the Tennessee River, Scrugg's BBQ is making a name for itself. Local patrons

declare that they have the best brisket on the planet, not to mention their fried catfish or stuffed taters. Stop on in and see if you agree.

### SMOKEY C'S BAR-B-QUE & WINGS

Where: 3075 Alabama 20, Decatur, 256-353-7787; smokeycsbbq.com  
Hours: 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday - Friday

Located on the western edge of Decatur, this family-run barbecue restaurant is known for more than just its award-winning white sauce. Stop in on a weekday for a great lunch of signature pork loin or a BBQ Tater Bowl and be sure to get a serving of their much-loved homemade banana pudding.

### WHITT'S BBQ

Where: 2532 Spring Ave. S.W. and 918 Sixth Ave. S.E. Decatur, 256-350-2748; whitts3.com  
Hours: 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday - Saturday

Whitt's BBQ has two locations to choose from in Decatur that are locally owned and operated by the Whitt family. Check out their website to find a location nearest to you, where you can get barbecue by the pound and all the sides you'd want, or a family pack to take home and enjoy.



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## ITALIAN/PIZZA

### ALFONSO'S PIZZA & ITALIAN RESTAURANT

Where: 725 Beltline Road S.W., Suite E, Decatur, 256-350-0211; thealfonsospizza.com

Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday – Thursday; 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday & Saturday

Afonso's has been a family-owned restaurant since 1977 with three generations having been a part of it. Alfonso's is best known for their brick oven pizzas with the thin, crispy crust with freshly made dough and sauces. Other options on the menu include shrimp alfredo, spaghetti bake and many more things to choose from.

### FRANCESCO'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT & PIZZERIA

Where: 2613 Alabama 31 S., Decatur, 256-584-6770; francescositalianrestaurant.org

Hours: 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday – Thursday & Sunday; 10 a.m.-10 pm Friday & Saturday

Francesco's is an Italian restaurant and pizzeria located in southern Decatur. On their menu, you'll find classic Italian dishes such as fettuccini, lasagna or calzones. All of the dishes are made to order with fresh ingredients. Try their famous pinwheels.

### PIZZA ED.

Where: 305 Main St. W., Hartselle, 256-502-9959; thepizzaed.com

Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday – Saturday; 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday  
Pizza Ed offers New York Style, brick oven pizza in the heart of downtown Hartselle. In addition to fresh-made pizza, you can find a variety of offerings, such as fettuccini alfredo, lasagna, calzones, strombolis, salads and more. You might even like to try a slice of lemoncello mascarpone cake for dessert.

### TERRANOVA'S

Where: 105 N. Jefferson St., Athens, 256-800-8061; terranovasrestaurant.com

Hours: 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday & Sunday; 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday; 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday & Saturday

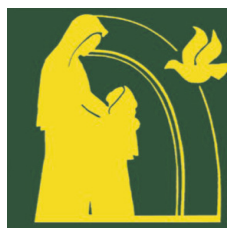
This is Terranova's second location, and the restaurant is found right on the historic square of downtown Athens. At Terranova's you will find savory Italian dishes like pasta Portofino or eggplant Parmesan to enjoy, while taking in the ambiance of Italian antiques and "spunky memorabilia."

### THE VILLAGE PIZZA

Where: 15728 East Limestone Road, Athens, 256-232-3388; thevillagepizza.org

Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday – Saturday; 4p.m.-8 p.m. Sunday

This restaurant has been creating handmade pizzas since 1989. You can find pizzas, pasta, wings and more in this family-friendly and locally loved pizzeria.



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## MEXICAN

### DON ALEJO MEXICAN RESTAURANT

Where: 800 Highway 31 S.W. Suite D., Hartselle, 256-778-3325; don-alejo-mexican-restaurant.business.site

Hours: 11 a.m.- 10 p.m. Sunday – Thursday; 11 a.m.- 10:30 p.m. Friday & Saturday

Don Alejo Mexican Restaurant is a family-owned restaurant offering classic Mexican cuisine in a welcoming environment. You'll find many things to choose from on their menu, from fajitas and chimichangas to flaming cheese. Try their xango for dessert – fried cheesecake with ice cream, and be sure to stop in for "Taco Tuesday."

### LA MONARCA SUPERMARKET

Where: 2528 Spring Ave. S.W., Decatur, 256-686-4447

Hours: 8 a.m.- 9 p.m. Sunday – Saturday

La Monarca is a restaurant tucked in the back of a Mexican market. Locals and visitors alike come in to get what they consider authentic Mexican foods like Diablo shrimp, an agua fresca – or you'll even find grilled cactus.

### LAS VIAS MEXICAN GRILL

Where: 1000 Beltline Rd, SW, Suite Q, Decatur, 256-552-7772;

Hours: 10:30 a.m.- 9:30 p.m. Monday – Thursday; 10:30 a.m.-11 p.m.

Friday & Saturday; 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday

2224 Sixth Ave. S.E., Decatur; 256-686-3344;

Hours: 10 a.m.- 10 p.m. daily

And 711 Nance Ford Road, Hartselle, 256-751-1402;

Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. daily

lasviasmexicangrill.com

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## DELIS/BREAKFAST/LUNCH

### CAHOOT'S

Where: 117 Main Street W., Hartselle, 256-751-4723  
Hours: 11 a.m.- 2:30 p.m. Monday - Friday

At Cahoots you'll find nostalgic décor in every nook and cranny, even every table is different. This restaurant offers homemade southern favorites for lunch in a casual and fun environment. Check out their Fried Green Tomato BLT or Bacon Jam Club sandwich.

### CAMELLIA'S COUNTRY STORE & RESTAURANT

Where: 18025 Nuclear Plant Road, Athens, 256-444-4800  
Hours: 5 a.m.-1:30 p.m. daily

Tucked inside a country store, Camellia's offers patrons Southern breakfast or lunch options. You can find classic biscuits and gravy, eggs and bacon or even catfish and chicken salad.

### CARL'S DELI

Where: 3151 Alabama 67, Somerville, 256-606-3465  
Hours: 5 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday - Saturday

Stop in for an early morning breakfast of country ham and biscuits, or some pancakes and sausage at Carl's Deli in Somerville. They also offer daily lunch specials and classics like burgers or grilled ham and cheese sandwiches.

### CITY CAFÉ

Where: 101 First Ave. S.E., Decatur, 256-353-9719  
Hours 8 a.m.- 2:30 p.m. Monday - Friday;

Decatur's City Café has been around since 1933 and offers breakfast and lunch specials. You'll find classic "meat and threes" as well as daily specials for lunch. Breakfast options include breakfast sandwiches, country ham, grits and more.

### LET'S DO LUNCH

Where: 435 Holly Street N.E., Decatur, 256-340-1317;  
letsdolunchdecatur.com  
Hours: 8 a.m.- 3 p.m. Monday - Thursday; 8 a.m.- 2 p.m. Friday

Just as the name indicates, this is a great place to stop in for a tasty lunch. Everything is made fresh and has no preservatives or additives. Try their turkey bacon berry wrap or strawberry pretzel salad! This restaurant was featured in the "Alabama Tourism 100 Dishes to Eat Before You Die."

### SOCIAL GRACE'S

Where: 115 Johnston St. S.E., Decatur, 256-350-6715  
Hours: 8 a.m.- 3 p.m. Monday - Friday

This restaurant offers made-from-scratch deli foods and hot lunch specials. When visiting Social Grace's, formerly Curry's, you might choose their Fried Oyster Salad, a Fried Scallop Po Boy or maybe a Downtown Muffuletta. It's the perfect place to stop in for lunch, or to chat over a tasty dessert.

### SWEET THYMES

Where: 407 N. Clinton St., Athens, 256-444-4142  
Hours: 10:30 am - 2 pm Monday - Friday

Sweet Thymes gets its name from its signature desserts, but you'll also find great entrees for lunch as well. Their menu offers things like honey pecan chicken and toasted ham subs alongside their sweets.

### WHISK'D CAFÉ

Where: 1051 Grant St. S.E., Decatur, 256-580-5909; whiskdcafedecatur.com  
Hours: 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Monday - Sunday

This is a neighborhood breakfast café that features farm-to-table, seasonal Southern favorites. You might choose from a funnel cake with raspberry jam, biscuits with chocolate gravy, or even a carnitas omelet.

### WILDWOOD DELI

Where: 113 Market St. W., Athens, 256-206-9384  
Hours: 10:30 a.m.- 2:30 p.m. Monday - Thursday, 10:30 a.m.- 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.-8 p.m. Friday

Here you can enjoy fresh, made-to-order deli fare and gourmet salads. As well as Southern favorites like a pimento cheese sandwich with homemade soup. Wildwood Deli is located just a stone's throw from the Limestone County courthouse.



## BAR AND GRILL

### B.B. PERRINS SPORTS GRILLE

Where: 608 Holly St. N.E., Decatur, 256-355-1045; bbperrins.com  
Hours: 11 a.m.- 9 p.m. Tuesday – Thursday; 11 a.m.- 10 p.m. Monday, Friday & Saturday

Decatur's first local sports bar and grille was established in 1988. It has a tradition of creating delicious barbecue that is hickory smoked and served with homemade sauces. Try their "seafood-less" gumbo, their Glover special or their PB Fudge Pie. There's lots to choose from.

### BANK STREET GRILL

Where: 719 Bank St. N.E., Decatur, 256-686-4202; bankstreetgrillal.com  
Hours: 5 p.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday – Saturday

At Bank Street Grill, you can enjoy hand-cut filet mignon, freshly ground Angus burgers. Or maybe you would prefer unique starters like bacon-wrapped quail breast, or Buffalo fried okra and fried green tomatoes.

### BENTLEY'S AT THE outhouse

Where: 200 Main St. W., Hartselle, 256-754-5188; bentleysouthouse.com  
Hours: 11 a.m.- 10 p.m. Tuesday – Thursday; 11 a.m.- midnight Friday & Saturday  
With a name you won't forget, Bentley's at the Outhouse is a bustling burger joint in downtown Hartselle. It offers everything from bacon mac & cheese to peanut butter burgers.

This restaurant has a down home, sports bar feel, with 15 TVs, outdoor seating, a full bar, and live music events.

### BRICK DELI

Where: 112 East Moulton St., Decatur, 256-355-8318; brickdeli.com  
Hours: 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday & Tuesday; 11 a.m.-11:30 p.m. Wednesday & Thursday, 11 a.m.-2 a.m. Friday & Saturday

The Brick Deli offers a selection of original sandwiches like the Father Guido or 5 Finger Banjo Picker. You'll also find live music and a full-service bar with 25 beers on tap. Prior to 9 p.m. it is a very family-friendly environment.

### HARD DOCK

Where: 3755 U.S. 31 N., Decatur, 256-340-9234  
Hours: 4 p.m.-11 p.m. Tuesday – Thursday; 4 p.m. - 2 a.m. Friday & Saturday; 4 p.m.-midnight Sunday

Hard Dock stands out with its unique location. You can enjoy a burger or maybe some shrimp and live music while taking in the beautiful scenery of the Tennessee River. As the name indicates, this bar & grill is right on the water.

The Brick Deli in downtown Decatur is a favorite spot for casual diners all day and the business crowd at lunch.



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## COMFORT FOOD

### THE RAILYARD

Where: 209 Second Ave. S.E., Decatur, 256-580-5707; [therailyarddecatur.com](http://therailyarddecatur.com)  
Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday – Saturday

The Railyard offers a seasonally changing menu of “farm-to-fork” comfort foods that highlight locally grown and harvested ingredients, in addition to their selection of craft beers and seasonal libations. The restaurant is located downstairs from Second Avenue Southeast, and can also be accessed from parking lot level off of First Avenue Southeast.

## MEDITERRANEAN

### GYRO UNO

Where: 324 Second Ave. S.E., Decatur, 256-686-4100  
Hours: 10:30 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday – Friday;  
11 a.m.- 5 p.m. Saturday  
Gyro Uno is a Decatur favorite for grabbing some classic Greek fare. You can find classics like Spanakopita and Falafel gyros, as well as some fun twists like a BBQ Gyro.

### JOSIE'S MEDITERRANEAN CAFÉ

Where: 109 Second Ave. N.E., Decatur, 256-822-2229; [josiesdowntown.com](http://josiesdowntown.com)  
Hours: 11 a.m. – 11 p.m. Tuesday; 11 a.m.- midnight Wednesday & Thursday; 11 a.m.-1 a.m. Friday & Saturday; 11 a.m.- 5 p.m. Sunday

Located in downtown Decatur, Josie's has classic Mediterranean dishes, such as paella, steak marsala or flatbreads. They offer daily specials made from fresh, seasonal ingredients. Of course, in addition to a delicious meal, you can also choose from their wines, cocktails and tapas.



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## COFFEE HOUSE

### SQUARE CLOCK COFFEE

Where: 121 S. Marion St., Athens, 256-233-8248  
Hours: 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday – Friday; 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday

Square Clock Coffee has all of the classic and specialty coffee beverages you would expect, and is located right by the courthouse in downtown Athens. You can also get baked goods and salads, and you should try their Reuben sandwich.

### WAREHOUSE COFFEE

Where: 315 Main St. W., Hartselle, (256) 387-0890  
Hours: 7 a.m.- 5 p.m. Monday; 7 a.m.- 3 p.m. Saturday

Warehouse coffee is an inviting coffee shop located in the heart of Hartselle. You can find classic coffee shop breakfast offerings like muffins or sausage balls as well as lunch items to fill you up. Of course, specialty coffee drinks are a must, or even an ice cream milkshake. Warehouse offers free Wi-Fi and plenty of space to relax, enjoy your coffee and recharge – with plenty of outlets available for your devices, too.





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TIME TO EAT



## ASIAN

### PHO CAN THO

Where: 616 U.S. 31 S., Suite B, Athens, 256-797-2239;

phocanthorestaurant.com

Hours: 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, Thursday – Saturday; 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday

Pho Can Tho is a Vietnamese restaurant that offers slow cooked, house-made pho, spring rolls, fried rice, thai tea and more. There's also a kids' menu and homemade limeade and lemonade. A great place to stop in with the family.



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My Name is **Lois Dawes**. Born and raised in Decatur, Alabama; I know the area and the market like the back of my hand! I serve all areas of the Tennessee Valley including Cullman, Madison, Limestone and Lawrence Counties. Now that you're in town, I'd like to meet you to find out what you're looking for so I can help you make your Next Move the Right Move!

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256-350-0404  
Mon-Sat 9:30 am - 8:30 pm