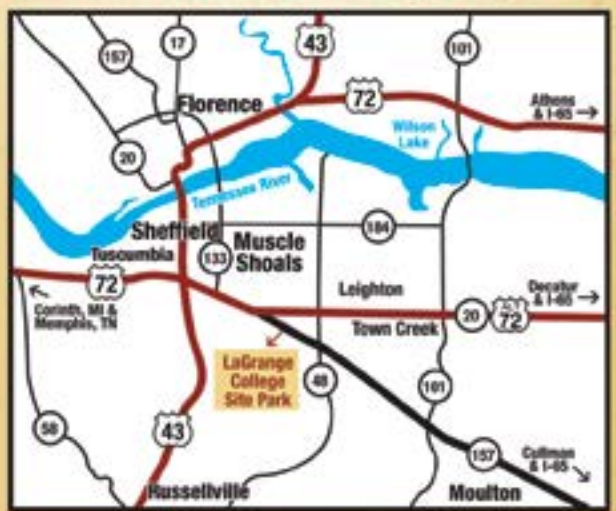


SITE PARK, PIONEER VILLAGE & ANTEBELLUM CEMETERY
 "West Point of the South"
 1830-1863
LAGRANGE COLLEGE
 & MILITARY ACADEMY



LaGrange College Site Park is located 8 miles southeast of Muscle Shoals and 4 miles south of Leighton, Alabama, off HWY 157 (65 miles southeast of Shiloh National Military Park).

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| Park Open Daily Year Round Welcome Center is open Sun. 1-4 p.m. and by appointment at 256-446-9324. Admission to the Park is free. | For lodging and tourist info: Colbert County Tourism & Convention Bureau 800-344-0783 • 256-383-0783 colbertcountytourism.org |
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The continuing restoration and preservation of LaGrange College Site Park is accomplished through tax deductible memberships and donations. For more information contact:

LaGrange Living Historical Association
LaGrange College Site Park
 1491 LaGrange College Road • P.O. Box 306 • Leighton, AL 35646
 256-466-9324 • louiselinville@earthlink.net

lagrange-collegesitepark.org
facebook.com/LaGrange.Collegesite.Park

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LaGrange College 1830 - 1855

In the early 1820's, LaGrange was established on the crest of a mountain near Leighton, AL with about 400 inhabitants. In the late 1820s, the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church solicited proposals for a site and subscription of \$10,000. On December 4, 1828, the Methodist Church accepted the LaGrange proposition. Later that month, the Mississippi Conference joined in the efforts to establish a college. Representatives from the two conferences met at LaGrange on January 10, 1829, and selected a site for the college. On January 11, 1830, "LaGrange College" opened with an enrollment of 70 students and became the first state chartered college in Alabama. Rev. Robert Paine was the first president (1830-1846).



The enrollment peaked at 139 in 1845. Dr. Richard H. Rivers became president in 1854, when the college faced serious financial problems. In response to an offer of better support, Rivers moved the college to Florence, Alabama in January 1855. Over 150 graduates received A.B. degrees during its 25-year history. The establishment of LaGrange College in 1830 might well be considered the birth of collegiate education in Alabama. The move was controversial, some students and faculty remained on the old campus, and the Florence institution was denied permission to use the name of LaGrange College.

It was chartered as Florence Wesleyan University on February 14, 1856, and is known today as the University of North Alabama. Listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage in 1976.

LaGRANGE MILITARY ACADEMY 1857-1862

After LaGrange College moved to Florence in January 1855, a group of LaGrange citizens organized a college in the vacant buildings under the old name. Rev. Felix Johnson was elected president. To increase the patronage, a military feature was introduced in 1857. Major J.W. Robertson became superintendent and classes were suspended while a third major building was erected for the cadets. The college reopened in February 1858, as LaGrange College and Military Academy. The new institution's financial situation was dismal until the State of Alabama provided military equipment and scholarships. The Academy soon flourished and became known as the "West Point of the South." In 1860, the name was changed to LaGrange Military Academy. By 1861, the enrollment was almost 200 cadets. During its existence, 259 cadets from nine states attended the Academy.

In 1861, many LaGrange cadets left to join the Confederate Army. Consequently, the Academy was forced to suspend classes on March 1, 1862. Only two

cadets had graduated. Major Robertson was authorized to organize the 35th Alabama Infantry Regiment, C.S.A. He was elected colonel and the remaining cadets formed part of one company. The regiment was mustered into the Confederate Army on March 12, 1862, for three years. On April 28, 1863, the 10th Missouri Calvary of the Union Army, known as the "Destroying Angels," commanded by Col. Florence M. Comyn, burned the Military Academy, the nearby La Fayette Female Academy, many businesses, and homes. The village of LaGrange dwindled away. In 1995, LaGrange Park was transferred from the Alabama Historical Commission to the LaGrange Living Historical Association. Thereafter, the site of Alabama's first chartered college was enhanced and stands today as a historical landmark.

Listed on Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage in 1976.



Cover photo: Re-enactor Kelvin Grays portrays Maj. James W. Robertson, Alabama Volunteer Corps during Recall LaGrange.

LaGrange College Site Park LaGrange Welcome Center



LaGrange College Site was listed on **The Alabama Register of Landmarks & Heritage** in 1976. Ownership of the property was transferred from the Alabama

Historical Commission to the **LaGrange Living Historical Association** in 1995. A log, dog-trot house was purchased and moved to the site around the same time to be used as a Welcome Center, Museum and meeting place for the Association members. **The park is open year round. The Welcome Center is open on Sundays 1-4 p.m., or by appointment: 256-446-9324.**

The pioneer Village also includes a **Picnic Pavilion, a Memorial Monument, Several Historic Markers, Log Barn, Smoke House, Bed & Breakfast Inn, Wedding Chapel, Barber Shop, Out House, Slave Log Kitchen, Post Office, Country Store, Black Smith Shop** and a **Caretaker's House.**

LaGrange Rock Shelter National Register of Historic Places

The Rock Shelter is located within walking distance of the LaGrange College Site Park. It was added to the National Register in 1974, after an Archaeological Excavation was performed in 1972. Test revealed that the site was once home to the Paleo Indians and said to be one of the oldest "Early Man" archaeological sites in North Alabama. After the excavation, it was determined that the Rock Shelter was significant to the pre-history of the entire North American continent.



Petrified Wood, Mineral Springs & Iron Ore

Unique to this area, on LaGrange Mountain is the petrified wood that has been found over the years. A Geological Survey made by State Geologist during the 1800's discovered that one of the giant ferns was 350,000 years old. There are several different mineral springs also located on the mountain. Some older folks called the springs "Healing Waters." Bits of iron ore can also be found on the mountain. Years ago, there was an iron ore mine a short distance from the college site.

LaGrange Cemetery

The Antebellum Cemetery is listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks & Heritage and is within walking distance of the LaGrange College Site. First Impression Cemetery Dramas



are portrayed by Re-Enactors during **Recall LaGrange**, of 19th century residents who once lived at LaGrange. Of particular interest is: **the Petrified Lady**, Annie Vinson Ford, who was discovered petrified after being removed from her burial plot to another plot in the cemetery. Another is: **Dr. George Kumpe** who became Captain of the Leighton Rangers during the Civil War, and **Abraham Ricks** whose Italian-Marble Mounument dominates the ghostly grave yard. Contributions for up-keep of the cemetery are tax deductible.

Plantation Log Kitchen

The Oaks Plantation log kitchen was once identified as one of the last log kitchens in existence in the State of Alabama. The Plantation and log kitchen were both placed on the **National Register of Historic Places** in



1976. Built in the early 1800's, the servants of Abraham Ricks prepared the families meals inside the kitchen and transported the food to the dining room of the main house. In order to save the log kitchen from destruction, in 2009 the building was dismantled, numbered and transported to the College Site. After the reconstruction, a number of original pieces of furniture were placed back inside the kitchen. **Today, the log kitchen is one of the main attractions of the park where, occasionally, cooking demonstrations are held.**

Student Field Trips & Group Tours

Educational Field Trips and Group Tours of the park and cemetery provide an in-depth look into the history of Alabama's 1st Chartered College and Historic Cemetery.



Reservations: 256-446-9324.

LaGrange Bed & Breakfast

The 1880, two bedroom log cabin, Bed & Breakfast Inn, is located on the crest of LaGrange Mountain, inside the pioneer village of the LaGrange College Site Park. It is discreetly modernized with



electricity and air conditioning for comfort. The sleeping quarters will accommodate five people. Reservations are available only from April thru November. **Contact: 256-446-9324** for additional information. Rental proceeds go toward operations of the LaGrange College Park.

LaGrange Country Store, Post Office and Black Smith Shop

Upon entering the log **Country Store**, kids of all ages experience life from years past; while purchasing wooden toys, hand-made aprons and lye soap. The top shelves are filled with displays of items once sold in country stores. **The Post Office** is

completely equipped with items once used in a Post Office from the past. Actual LaGrange stamped post cards can be mailed from the site. Adjoining the Country Store is a fully operating log **Black Smith Shop**. A black smith demonstrates the use of tools used in black smith work during school field trips and annual events. **Contact: 256-446-5358 for appointments.**



Christmas in the Country

LaGrange Christmas in the Country event is held each year on the **weekend before Thanksgiving**. The fund raising event for the park began several years ago as a Christmas Open House; with natural, hand-made decorations reflecting olden days. Today, the Open House Event has turned into much more: folks come early to purchase homemade baked goods for their Thanksgiving table, enjoy hay rides to the old LaGrange Cemetery, make family pictures for their Christmas cards, purchase craft items and talk with Santa. **The event is Free.**

Recall LaGrange 35th Alabama Infantry Regiment



Lew Brashears registers new recruits for the 35th Alabama Infantry Regiment Civil War Re-Enactment Group during the 2011 Recall LaGrange Event.

In 1861 recruitments were trained at the LaGrange Military Academy for enlistment in the 35th Alabama Infantry Regiment. **The Civil War Event is held the first weekend in May each year at the LaGrange College Site Park. It is hosted by the LaGrange Living Historical Association, the 27th Alabama Infantry Regiment and the Providence Living History Re-Enactors.** The 2013 event will commemorate the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the burning of the Military Academy.

Mountain Weddings Overlooking the Tennessee Valley

A natural setting nestled inside a Historic Park.

Amenities Include:

- Log Chapel or Outdoor Setting
- Ceremony by Ordained Minister
- Two nights lodging in B & B Inn
- Reception
- Tables, Chairs & Ferns
- Photography (available)
- Music

Visit our Web site: www.lagrange-collegesitepark.org
www.facebook.com/LaGrange.Collegesite.Park

