



# ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Linda Derry  
Site Director

Old Cahawba Archaeological Park  
9518 Cahaba Road  
Orrville, Alabama 36767

cahawba@bellsouth.net  
ahc.alabama.gov  
334-872-8058

**For Immediate Release  
April 26, 2018**

## Old Cahawba To Host Descendants of *Sultana* Disaster

Old Cahawba, a historic property of the Alabama Historical Commission, will host the 31<sup>st</sup> annual reunion of the *Sultana* Descendants' Association on Saturday, April 28. The members are descendants of Union Civil War soldiers who died in a terrible steamboat accident that occurred more than 150 years ago.



The steamboat *Sultana* was hired to transport Union prisoners, including many held at Cahaba Federal Prison, back north to return to their homes. Tragically, the ship exploded three days after departing Vicksburg, Mississippi, on April 27, 1865. Some 1,800 passengers were killed, making it the most deadly maritime disaster in U.S. history.

"The Alabama Historical Commission, which owns and operates the park, extended an invitation to the *Sultana* Descendants' Association a year ago, because reunion events at the park are a meaningful way to celebrate Alabama's Bicentennial years," said Linda Derry, Site Director of Old Cahawba.

According to Norman Shaw, spokesman for the *Sultana* Descendants' Association, "Our group has held reunions at every important site related to the *Sultana* story (Vicksburg, Memphis, Andersonville and Cincinnati, where it was built, etc.) except the prison site at Old Cahawba, which we will tour Saturday morning. Then we'll spend the afternoon visiting the battle sites of Gen. Wilson's attack and victory over Gen. Forrest on April 2, 1865, during Wilson's raid through the South."

**PLEASE NOTE:** Media are welcome to attend but this event is private and not open to the public in order to give the descendants a full historical experience.

### **SCHEDULE:**

**Friday, April 27, 6:30pm – Hampton Inn, Selma, Ala.** – The *Sultana* Descendants' Association will be welcomed by Selma Mayor Dario Melton. His welcome has a special meaning for this group because one of his ancestors, a man who was enslaved on a nearby plantation, bravely rescued an escaped P.O.W. from Cahawba and hid him until the soldier could be claimed by Union forces after the Battle of Selma.

**Saturday, April 28, 8:20am – Old Cahawba, Orrville, Ala.** – Beginning at 8:20am, the group will tour the prison site. The memorial service is scheduled for 9:30am. At 11:15am the group will have lunch onsite at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. There they will be greeted by Dallas



# ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Linda Derry  
Site Director

Old Cahawba Archaeological Park  
9518 Cahaba Road  
Orrville, Alabama 36767

cahawba@bellsouth.net  
ahc.alabama.gov  
334-872-8058

county resident Fran Pearce and her grandchildren. They are descendants of a Confederate soldier who guarded the Union soldiers at the Cahawba prison. The Pearces, along with Orrville's Farmer's Market, plan to present a "peace offering" to each of the Sultana descendants as a symbol of the restoration of friendly relations between North and South.

**Directions to Old Cahawba:** From downtown Selma, take Highway 22 (Dallas Avenue) west 8.6 miles. Cross over the Cahaba River and turn left onto County Road 9 and follow this 3.3 miles until it dead ends. Turn left onto County Road 2 and follow this 1.5 miles until you see the Visitor Center on the right. Visitor Center Address: 9518 Cahaba Road, Orrville, AL 36767.

For more information contact Linda Derry at [cahawba@bellsouth.net](mailto:cahawba@bellsouth.net) or call the park at 334-872-8058.

Old Cahawba lies at the confluence of the Alabama and Cahaba Rivers, and from 1819 to 1826 it served as Alabama's first capital. Today, the Alabama Historical Commission owns and operates this significant archaeological site.

Find [Old Cahawba](#) on **Facebook** or visit [ahc.alabama.gov](http://ahc.alabama.gov)



## **About the Alabama Historical Commission**

*Located in historic downtown Montgomery at 468 S. Perry Street, the Alabama Historical Commission is the state historic preservation agency for Alabama. The agency was created by an act of the state legislature in 1966 with a mission to protect, preserve and interpret Alabama's historic places. AHC works to accomplish its mission through two fields of endeavor: Preservation and promotion of state-owned historic sites as public attractions; and, statewide programs to assist people, groups, towns, and cities with local preservation activities. For a complete list of programs and properties owned and operated by the AHC, hours of operation, and admission fees please visit [ahc.alabama.gov](http://ahc.alabama.gov)*

###