

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Selma-to-Montgomery  
National Historic Trail

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# Preserving Our Heritage

Along the Selma-to-Montgomery  
National Historic Trail

The Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail was established by Congress in 1996 to protect, preserve and commemorate the story of the events, people, and route of the 1965 Voting Rights March in Alabama. The route is also designated as a National Scenic Byway/All-American Road.


## **The story of the March**

The climax to the decades-long voting rights crusade in Alabama erupted in March 1965 as Civil Rights activists converged on Selma, Alabama. The final push to achieve a nationwide solution to the disenfranchisement of African Americans came as the result of three strategically planned marches, the first of which took place on March 7, 1965.

Nearly 500 marchers proceeded through the streets of Selma and across the Edmund Pettus Bridge where they were faced by scores of Alabama State troopers. The troopers attacked the non-violent marchers, leaving many of them bloodied and severely injured, on a date forever ensconced in history as "Bloody Sunday."

A second march ended in a prayer session at the point of Sunday's confrontation. When an injunction circumventing the march to the Alabama State Capitol was reversed, a plan was devised to conduct the monumental trek on Sunday, March 21, 1965.

Thousands of people, representing many races and nationalities, moved before the eyes of the world in demonstration to guarantee the right to vote. The five-day/four-night event covered a 54-mile route



along U.S. Highway 80 through chilling weather and rain. The result was the personal triumph of those who participated in the historic trek and the signing of the Voting Rights Act on August 6, 1965.

Today, the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail stands as a testament to the sacrifices made in the triumph to preserve the “right to vote” as the bedrock of American democracy.

### **Landmarks along the trail that require preservation**

Although the trail unit owns no property, there are significant historic structures/landmarks that are central to fully telling the story of the 1965 Voting Rights March. It is the job of trail staff to form and maintain partnerships that encourage the preservation of these entities. The following are just a few of the sites that require preservation to help trail staff tell the story of the trail...

- Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church
- Edmund Pettus Bridge
- U.S. Highway 80
- City of St. Jude
- Campsites
- Alabama State Capitol

### **Mission of National Park Service on the trail**

It is the mission of the National Park Service to preserve and interpret the history of the sites associated with the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama which resulted in the signing of the Voting Rights Act in August 6, 1965. The National Park Service works with the community to preserve America's treasures so that future generations may enjoy our heritage.