

St. Stephens Historical Commission

Functional Analysis & Records Disposition Authority

**Presented to the
State Records Commission
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Functional and Organizational Analysis of the St. Stephens Historical Commission

Sources of Information

Representatives of the St. Stephens Historical Commission

Code of Alabama 1975, Sections 41-9-330 through 41-9-355

Alabama Government Manual (1998)

“History of Old St. Stephens.” Publication of the St. Stephens Historical Commission

St. Stephens Historical Commission Audit Report for October 1, 1997 through August 31, 2000

Historical Context

The townsite of Old St. Stephens is one of the most important historical and archaeological sites in Alabama. During a brief three decades, beginning in the 1790s to its decline in the 1820s, St. Stephens was the site of a Spanish fort, an American fort and trading post, and the Alabama Territorial capital.

St. Stephens was situated on a high bluff the Indians called Hobucakintopa at a point along the Tombigbee River where rocky shoals forced boats traveling north from Mobile to end their journey. As early as 1772, English traveler Bernard Romans noted that "sloops and schooners may come up to this rapid; therefore, I judge some considerable settlement will take place" ("History of Old St. Stephens"). By 1789 the Spanish governor of Mobile, Juan Vincente Folch, had recognized the strategic importance of the area and established a fort and an outpost there, known as Fort St. Estevan. Americans poured into the frontier settlement, and by 1796 over 190 white inhabitants and some 97 slaves were living around the fort. By the Treaty of San Lorenzo, Spain turned the fort over to the U.S. government on February 5, 1799.

In 1803, the Choctaw Trading House was established at St. Stephens, and George Strother Gaines took charge of the Choctaw Agency in 1805. He continued to use the old Spanish blockhouse as the agency's store and established a land office in the former warehouse. The home of the former Spanish commandant served as Gaines' residence. In 1811, Gaines constructed what may have been the first brick building erected by Americans in Alabama; it served as a warehouse.

In 1804, Ephraim Kirby was appointed superior court judge of the Mississippi Territory by President Thomas Jefferson. In a letter to the president, Kirby described the inhabitants of St. Stephens as "illiterate, wild and savage, of depraved morals, unworthy of public confidence or private esteems, litigious, disunited, and knowing each other, universally distrustful of each other." In spite of these possible shortcomings, the trading post was active in the deerskin trade with the Choctaw Indians. Pioneer minister Lorenzo Dow reported that by 1805 many improvements had taken place and predicted that the area would be "a place of fame in time."

On December 18, 1811, the General Assembly of the Mississippi Territory passed an official act establishing the town of St. Stephens, but the real growth of St. Stephens began in 1815 when the Mississippi Territorial legislature surveyed the townsite and lots were sold. By 1816, some 40 houses were reported when only a year before there had been just nine. Following Mississippi statehood in 1817, the Alabama Territory was established and St. Stephens served as its territorial capital from 1817 to 1819, a period that saw the town grow at an astounding rate. By 1818, St. Stephens boasted over 500 homes, as well as nearly 20 stores and commercial establishments.

Among the prominent citizens of St. Stephens was Henry Hitchcock, first attorney general of Alabama and later chief justice of the state Supreme Court. A post office was established in 1818 and George Fisher carried mail between St. Stephens and Mobile. Thomas Eastin published the *Halcyon and Tombeckbe Advertiser*, the fourth newspaper established in the Alabama Territory. Eastin described St. Stephens as a town of elegant tree-shaded homes, spacious streets, and genteel citizens, many of whom had emigrated from North Carolina. Washington Academy, founded in 1811 and recognized as Alabama's first chartered school, was located on a prominent hill in town. A theater company performed there and sold tickets for one dollar. Legal and medical professionals practiced there, travelers were welcomed at the St. Stephens Hotel, and numerous dry goods stores offered an array of goods to the citizens. The Tombeckbe Bank, the first to be chartered in the state, was established by Israel Pickens, who would later become the third governor of Alabama.

When the first state assembly adjourned at St. Stephens on February 14, 1818, inhabitants of the town were unaware of political maneuvering that would spell doom for the first territorial capital of Alabama. Many Alabama residents thought the capital should be moved to a more central location. Tuscaloosa was under consideration when Governor Bibb made the announcement in 1819 that the capital would be moved to Cahawba. Loss of the capital was not the only problem experienced by St. Stephens. The development of shallow draft boats permitted travelers to traverse the shoals and venture further upriver, and, in the doomed town, yellow fever outbreaks began to afflict the citizens.

At its zenith between 1819 and 1820, St. Stephens had a population of several thousand; within two decades most residents had moved two miles west to settle New St. Stephens, a prominent crossroads served by a railway station. By 1833 the old town had become a small village, and by the Civil War, Old St. Stephens had all but disappeared, its buildings in ruin and its citizens moved elsewhere.

The St. Stephens Historical Society was established in the 1890s to promote preservation of the old town, which was on land that was eventually bought by a private company that built a rock quarry near the old town-site. Local efforts eventually brought state-wide attention to the importance of the site and the threat it faced. The state bought part of the old town and in 1988 the legislature of Alabama created the St. Stephens Historical Commission by Act Number 88-335. Amendments to the law in 1996 and 2000 cleaned up the language of the original act, but had no bearing on the operations of the commission. The park opened to the public on May 20, 2000.

Agency Organization

The St. Stephens Historical Commission consists of 11 members as follows: two members appointed by the governor; one appointed by the Alabama Historical Commission; two appointed by the Washington County Historical Society; one appointed by the Washington County Commission; four appointed by the legislative delegation representing Washington County; and one ex officio member who is a member of the House of Representatives representing the geographical community of St. Stephens in Washington County. The commission meets at St. Stephens in Washington County each September on a day designated by the chair. Six members constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Additional meetings may be held at such times and places within the state as may be necessary upon call of the chair or, in the case of his/her absence or incapacity, of the vice chair, or on the call of any five members of the commission. The commission appoints an executive director, who hires the necessary personnel to operate the St. Stephens Historical Park, which is a 200-acre property with a 90-acre lake, and the old Washington County Courthouse (circa 1853). An organizational chart is attached.

Agency Function and Subfunctions

The mandated functions of the St. Stephens Historical Commission are to acquire, maintain, protect, and promote properties of historical interest at St. Stephens in Washington County in the vicinity of the site of the first territorial capitol of Alabama. The commission is one of the agencies primarily involved in carrying out the Stewardship function of Alabama government. In the performance of its mandated function, the commission may engage in the following subfunctions:

- **Promulgating Rules and Regulations.** The commission establishes its own procedures governing its operations and activities, including the management of any real property under its jurisdiction and providing for fines for certain violations. Violations of specified rules and regulations are a Class C misdemeanor.
- **Identifying, Acquiring, and Preserving.** The commission identifies and acquires properties and objects of historic interest at St. Stephens to be preserved on behalf of the State of Alabama. The commission also marks in a suitable manner the places or locations of historic interest at St. Stephens, and prepares and publishes for distribution pamphlets or other printed matter related to the site.
- **Enforcing.** The commission is authorized to hire law enforcement officers to enforce its rules and regulations, as well as enforce all other related laws and regulations as necessary or appropriate. The law enforcement officers have the general law enforcement authority of other peace officers of the State of Alabama.

- **Facilitating Recreation.** The department administers, manages, and maintains the St. Stephens Historical Park, which is a 200-acre property with a 90-acre lake, and constructs and operates public service facilities within the park. Service privileges and conveniences include facilities such as parking lots, walkways, shelters, pavilions, a fishing lake, piers, trails, a boat ramp, and beach areas. The commission prepares and updates maps for management areas and park trails and makes decisions regarding expansion.

- **Administering Internal Operations.** A significant portion of the agency's work includes general administrative, financial, and personnel activities performed to support the programmatic areas of the agency.

Managing the Agency: Activities involved in managing the agency may include internal office management activities such as corresponding and communicating; scheduling; meeting; creating policy and procedures; reporting; lit igating; legi slating (drafting, lobby ing, tracking); publicizing and providing information; managing records; and managing information systems and technology.

Managing Finances: Activities involved in managing finances may include the following: budgeting (preparing and reviewing the budget package, submitting the budget package to the Department of Finance, and documenting amendments and performance of the budget); purchasing (requisitioning and purchasing supplies and equipment, receipting and invoicing for goods, and authorizing payment for products received); accounting for the expenditure, encumbrance, disbursement, and reconciliation of funds within the agency's budget through a uniform system of accounting and reporting; authorizing travel; contracting with companies or individuals; bidding for products and services; and assisting in the audit process.

Managing Human Resources: Activities involved in managing human resources may include the following: recruiting and hiring eligible individuals to fill vacant positions within the agency; providing compensation and benefits to employees; supervising employees (evaluating performance, disciplining, granting leave, and monitoring the accumulation of leave); and providing training and continuing education for employees.

Managing Properties, Facilities, and Resources: Activities involved in managing properties, facilities, and resources may include the following: inventorying and accounting for non-consumable property and reporting property information to the appropriate authority; constructing buildings and facilities; leasing and/or renting offices or facilities; providing for security and/or insurance for property; and assigning, inspecting, and maintaining agency property, including vehicles.

Analysis of Record Keeping System and Records Appraisal of the St. Stephens Historical Commission

Agency Record Keeping System

The St. Stephens Historical Commission maintains most of its records in paper form in its offices. Currently, records documenting its artifacts are maintained by the University of South Alabama. The website, www.oldststephens.com, contains information on the commission and the town-site, but it is maintained by the University of South Alabama.

Records Appraisal

The following is a discussion of the two major categories of records created and/or maintained by the St. Stephens Historical Commission: Temporary Records and Permanent Records.

I. Temporary Records. Temporary records should be held for what is considered their active life and be disposed of once all fiscal, legal, and administrative requirements have been met.

- **Structural Records.** These records, which include drawings and plans, document the erection and renovation of buildings and other structures at the park. The records are required for the maintenance and safety of the structures as long as the structures remain standing.

II. Permanent Records. The Government Records Division recommends the following records as permanent.

Promulgating Rules and Regulations

- **Minutes of Commission Meetings.** The minutes are created to record actions taken at commission meetings. The minutes are permanent because they document the official actions of the commission. (RDA page 3-2) (**Bibliographic Title: Meeting Minutes**)

Identifying, Acquiring, and Preserving

- **Site Files.** These files contain information on the artifacts found at St. Stephens as well as the site itself. Currently the records of the artifacts and of the site are filed together. As more work is done at the site, files will be separated based on use, but it is anticipated the records will all remain permanent. These records provide detailed descriptions and analyses of the historical and/or archaeological significance of the site. (RDA page 3-2)

- **Acquisition Records.** These records document the acquisition and ownership of the site of St. Stephens and the surrounding area. These records are necessary to document the transfer of legal title and physical custody of materials to the commission. (RDA page 3-2)

Enforcing

There are no permanent records documenting this subfunction.

Facilitating Recreation

- **Records of Recreational Activities.** Because the agency is in its infancy and has many plans for the future, it is recommended that all records that document recreational activities at the park be maintained. These records document such activities as stocking the lake, removing fish from the lake, and summary records of receipts, taxes, rentals, sales, usage, and inventories. Once the commission has had a chance to more fully implement its plans, it is recommended that these records be reappraised. (RDA page 3-3)

Administering Internal Operations

- **Publications.** These records are created to build public awareness about a variety of issues and agency activities. The publications are necessary to document what the agency tells the public and how the agency views itself. (RDA page 3-3) (**Bibliographic Title: State Publications**)
- **News Releases.** These records consist of news releases of the agency for purposes of publicity. They provide useful information documenting the activities of the agency. (RDA page 3-3) (**Bibliographic Title: News Releases**)

Permanent Records List

St. Stephens Historical Commission

Promulgating Rules and Regulations

1. Minutes of Commission Meetings

Identifying, Acquiring and Preserving

- *1. Site Files
- *2. Acquisition Records

Facilitating Recreation

- *1. Records of Recreational Activities

Administering Internal Operations

1. Publications
2. News Releases

*indicates records that ADAH anticipates will remain in the care and custody of the creating agency. ADAH staff is available to work with agency staff in determining the best location and storage conditions for the long-term care and maintenance of permanent records.

St. Stephens Historical Commission Records Disposition Authority

This Records Disposition Authority (RDA) is issued by the State Records Commission under the authority granted by the Code of Alabama 1975, Sections 41-13-5 and 41-13-20 through 21. It was compiled by the Government Records Division, Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH), which serves as the commission's staff, in cooperation with representatives of the St. Stephens Historical Commission. The RDA lists records created and maintained by the St. Stephens Historical Commission in carrying out its mandated functions and activities. It establishes retention periods and disposition instructions for those records and provides the legal authority for the St. Stephens Historical Commission to implement records destruction.

Alabama law requires public officials to create and maintain records that document the business of their offices. These records must be protected from "mutilation, loss, or destruction," so that they may be transferred to an official's successor in office and made available to members of the public. Under Code of Alabama 1975, Section 36-12-40, "every citizen has a right to inspect and take a copy of any public writing in this state, except as otherwise expressly provided by statute." Records must be kept in accordance with auditing standards approved by the Examiners of Public Accounts (Code of Alabama 1975, Sections 36-12-2, 36-12-4, and 41-5-23). For assistance in implementing this RDA, or for advice on records disposition or other records management concerns, contact the ADAH Government Records Division at (334) 242-4452.

Explanation of Records Requirements

- This RDA supersedes any previous records disposition schedules governing the retention of the St. Stephens Historical Commission's records. Copies of superseded schedules are no longer valid and should be discarded.
- The RDA establishes retention and disposition instructions for records regardless of the medium on which those records may be kept.
- Electronic mail is a communications tool that may record permanent or temporary information. As for records in any other format, the retention periods for e-mail records are governed by the requirements of the subfunctions to which the records belong.
- Some temporary records listed under the Administering Internal Operations subfunction of this RDA represent duplicate copies of records listed for long-term or permanent retention in the RDAs of other agencies.
- Certain other records-related materials need not be retained as records under the disposition requirements in this RDA. They may be disposed of, without notice of destruction, in whatever way the agency determines best. Such materials include: (1) duplicate record copies that do not require official action, so long as the creating office maintains the original record for the period required; (2) catalogs, trade journals, and other publications received

that require no action and do not document government activities; (3) stocks of blank stationery, blank forms, or other surplus materials that are not subject to audit and have become obsolete; (4) transitory records, which are temporary records created for short-term, internal purposes, may include, but are not limited to, telephone call-back messages, drafts of ordinary documents not needed for their evidential value, copies of material sent for information purposes but not needed by the receiving office for future business, and internal communications about agency social activities, such as a note to a group going to lunch.

Records Disposition Requirements

This section of the RDA is arranged by subfunctions of the St. Stephens Historical Commission and lists the groups of records created and/or maintained by the commission as a result of activities and transactions performed in carrying out these subfunctions. The commission may submit requests to revise specific records disposition requirements to the State Records Commission for consideration at its regular quarterly meetings.

■ Promulgating Rules and Regulations

MINUTES OF COMMISSION MEETINGS

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

Commission Meeting Notices

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Recordings of Commission Meetings

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until the official minutes are adopted and signed.

■ Identifying, Acquiring and Preserving

SITE FILES

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

ACQUISITION RECORDS

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

■ Enforcing

Accident/Arrest/Incident Files and Reports and Citations/Warnings

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years.

Records of Requests for Accident/Incident Information

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

■ **Facilitating Recreation**

Safety Inspections and Recommendation Records

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

Structural Records

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for life of the structure.

Architectural/Engineering Contracts

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for life of individual that affixed professional stamp.

Park Operation Records (includes park receipts, tax records, rental slips, sales and cash reports, rain checks, rental/utility payments, facility use reports, monthly budget reports, guest registers, and resale inventories)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records of Road Maintenance

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

Guest Comment Records

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

RECORDS OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES (all recreation related records not listed above, including records of stocking of lake, records of fish catches, and summary records of all recreational activities listed above)

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

■ **Administering Internal Operations**

Managing the Agency:

Legal Case Files

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after final settlement.

PUBLICATIONS

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

NEWS RELEASES

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

Appointment Letters

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the term expires.

Routine Correspondence (includes requests for information)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Mailing Lists

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

Administrative Reference Files

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

Records documenting the implementation of the agency's approved RDA (copies of transmittal forms to Archives or the State Records Center, evidence of obsolete records destroyed, and annual reports to the State Records Commission)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Copy of RDA

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the RDA is superseded.

Computer System Documentation (hardware/software manuals and diskettes, warranties, records of access/authorities, file naming conventions, and Y2K Records)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain documentation of former system 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the former hardware and software no longer exists anywhere in the agency and all permanent records have been migrated to a new system.

Managing Finances:

Records documenting the preparation of a budget request package and reporting of the status of funds, requesting amendments of allotments, and reporting program performance

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting the requisitioning and purchasing of supplies and equipment, receipting and invoicing for goods, and authorizing payment for products

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records of original entry or routine accounting transactions such as journals, registers, and ledgers; and records of funds deposited outside the state treasury, including bank statements, deposit slips, and cancelled checks

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting requests for authorization from supervisors to travel on official business and other related materials, such as travel reimbursement forms and itineraries

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Contractual records established for the purpose of services or personal property

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after expiration of the contract.

Records documenting the bid process, including requests for proposals and unsuccessful responses

Disposition: Retain in office (Code of Alabama 1975, Sections 41-16-24).

Agency Audit Reports

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Managing Human Resources:

Job Recruitment Materials

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Application Materials

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year.

Records documenting payroll (e.g. pre-payroll reports, payroll check registers)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting payroll deduction authorizations

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of employee from the agency.

Records documenting payroll deductions for tax purposes (including Form 941)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of employee from the agency.

Records documenting employee hours worked, leave earned, and leave taken

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Records documenting an employee's work history - generally maintained as a case file (includes records of final leave status)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of an employee from the agency.

Managing Properties, Facilities, and Resources:

Semiannual Inventory Lists

Disposition: Retain in office (Code of Alabama 1975, Section 36-16-8[1]).

Agency Copies of Transfer of State Property Forms (SD-1)

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Property Inventory Cards and/or Computer Files

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after end of the fiscal year in which the records were created.

Receipts of Responsibility for Property

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until return of item to property manager.

Records documenting the lease or rental of office or warehouse space for the department

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after expiration of the lease.

Approval of Records Disposition Authority

By signing this agreement the St. Stephens Historical Commission acknowledges its responsibilities in the proper management of its records and agrees to abide by the implementation guidelines listed below:

- The St. Stephens Historical Commission will designate a managerial position as the agency records officer. This position is responsible for: ensuring the development of quality record keeping systems that meet the business and legal needs of the agency, coordinating the transfer and destruction of records, ensuring that permanent records held on alternative storage media (such as microforms and digital imaging systems) are maintained in compliance with national and state standards, submitting an annual report on records management activities to the State Records Commission in April of each year, and ensuring the regular implementation of the agency's approved RDA.
- Permanent records in the St. Stephens Historical Commission's custody will be maintained under proper intellectual control and in an environment that will ensure their physical order and preservation.
- Destruction of temporary records, as authorized in this RDA, should occur agency-wide on a regular basis—for example, after the successful completion of an audit, at the end of an administration, or at the end of a fiscal year. Despite the RDA's provisions, no record should be destroyed that is necessary to comply with requirements of the state Sunset Act, audit requirements, or any legal notice or subpoena.
- The agency should maintain full documentation of any computerized record-keeping system it employs. It should develop procedures for: (1) backing up all permanent records held in electronic format; (2) storing a back-up copy off-site; and (3) migrating all permanent records when the system is upgraded or replaced. If the agency chooses to maintain permanent records solely in electronic format, it is committed to funding any system

upgrades and migration strategies necessary to ensure the records' permanent preservation and accessibility.

- The St. Stephens Historical Commission agrees to allow the staff of the State Records Commission or the Examiners of Public Accounts to examine the condition of the permanent records maintained in the custody of the agency and to inspect records destruction documentation. Government Records Division archivists are available to train the agency's staff in RDA implementation and otherwise assist the agency in implementing its records management program.

This records disposition authority is hereby adopted.

By: _____ Date: _____
James Long, Executive Director
St. Stephens Historical Commission

By: _____ Date: _____
Edwin C. Bridges, Chairman
State Records Commission