Early Visitors to Covington County, Alabama

Ponce de Leon came into Covington County in his quest for the Fountain of Youth. Desoto explored Covington County in the course of conquest and the Spanish established a little settlement on the Conecuh River which came to be known as Montezuma. After the War of 1812, Andrew Jackson, former U.S. President, is said to have come from South Carolina and travelled through this area en route to New Orleans. He cut three notches on trees as he passed through this wilderness to enable him to find his way back. Andalusia has an East Three Notch Street and a South Three Notch Street. Troy has a South Three Notch Street. These streets are supposed to lie on the famous "Three Notch Trail".

The State of Alabama was admitted to the Union in 1819 and Covington was made a county by legislature in 1821. It was created from Henry County. This new county was named in honour of Brigadier General Leonard Wailes Covington, who was a native of Maryland, killed in the War of 1812. At that time, Covington embraced several other counties, but through the years has been reduced to its present size by the carving out of Dale and Geneva Counties.

White settlers came from Georgia on ox wagons to what is now Covington County in 1816. An early settlement was near Green Bay. Another settlement was near Rose Hill, settled by the people from North and South Carolina. The earliest church was established near Rose Hill in 1823 and was called the Macedonia Church. The earliest settlement was on the Conecuh River, four miles west of what is now Andalusia. This community was the first county seat and a post office called Montezuma was established in 1829. There was river traffic from Pensacola to Montezuma in those days.

Immigrants flocked in from Georgia and the Carolinas after a Federal Law of 1836 had ordered the Indians to be moved west of the Mississippi. The first land sold by the U.S. Government in this county was near the present Community of Heath and sold through the Sparta Land Office in Conecuh County. Later, this land office was moved to Elba.

In 1841, the lowlands around Montezuma were flooded. A yellow fever epidemic occured which brought much disaster and disease to the lowlands. The settlers were forced to flee to higher grounds. They selected the highest point in the vicinity, a place of safety on the watershed that today is the City Square of Andalusia. This was called "New Site" until 1846 when a post office was established and the town designated as Andalusia.

No one knows where the name Andalusia originated, however, legend has it that Spanish explorers, Ponce de Leon and Desoto, and their men were the first white men in this area. It is felt that they were responsible for the Spanish influence. It is assumed that since Spain has an Andalusia Province, that this City was so named because of this influence.

In 1868, State Representative, Mancil, passed a bill in the Legislature of Alabama to change the name of Covington to Jones County. His purpose was to please the Judge of Probate, Josiah Jones, who had helped Mancil to be elected. Communication was not good in those days and the first that Jones knew about it was when he met Mancil on the street after his return home. Upon hearing that the Covington name had been changed, Jones was so angry that he threatened Mancil unless he changed the name back to Covington. Mancil then had the county name changed back to Covington. Thus Covington was Jones County for only the short period of four months in 1869.

There have been five courthouses in Covington County. The first was a log structure in Montezuma. The second a log structure in Andalusia, which burned in 1878 and destroyed all records. The third, a clapboard building was detroyed by fire in 1895. It was located east of the town square in Andalusia and had one grave in the courtyard. The fourth a brick building, occupied the centre of the town square in Andalusia and stood until the present courthouse was erected in about 1916.

Source: www.covingtonhistory.co.uk/Alabama.htm