

# ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION PRESS RELEASE



The Alabama Historical Commission **protects, preserves, and interprets** Alabama's historic place and is the State Historic Preservation Office.

[www.ahc.alabama.gov](http://www.ahc.alabama.gov)

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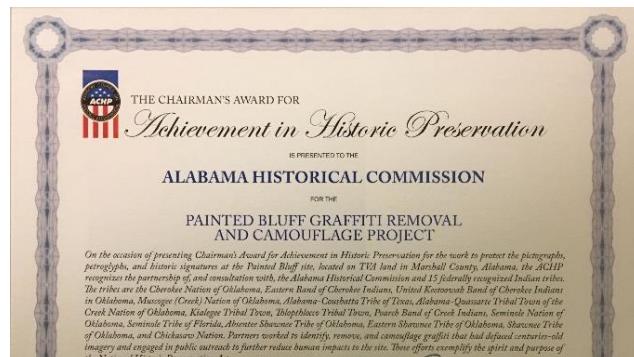
## ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL AWARD

On November 30, 2016 the Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office) received recognition from the national Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (AChP) for its work in helping to restore and protect the 500-year-old Native American cliff art known as Painted Bluff, Marshall County, Alabama.

The purpose of this project, a partnership between the Alabama Historical Commission, the University of Tennessee, the University of Alabama, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), 15 federally recognized Indian tribes, researchers, and local volunteers, was to identify, remove, and camouflage graffiti that had defaced the centuries-old imagery of Painted Bluff and to engage in public outreach to further reduce human impact to the site.

"The Painted Bluff project fulfills a number of the objectives we honor through the Chairman's Award, including the rehabilitation and stewardship of historic resources, as well as the public involvement of partners and stakeholders in preserving those resources," said AChP Chairman Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA.

"The Alabama Historical Commission is honored to be recognized by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and to receive this prestigious award for its role in helping to preserve Painted Bluff, said Lisa D. Jones, Executive Director of the Alabama Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Office. "It is a pleasure to work alongside such talented and passionate individuals who labor tirelessly to preserve our cultural resources."



*The Achievement in Historic Preservation award presented to the Alabama Historical Commission by the national Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.*

In 2004, archaeologists from the University of Tennessee—led by Dr. Jan Simek—visited the site and began to document the range of images. Simek’s team found more than 80 images on the cliffs, dating back 600 years—making it one of the country’s most significant rock art treasures.

The team also found Painted Bluff was under threat from natural weathering and damage caused by graffiti, rock climbing and vandalism, despite the site being protected under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and being eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2013 the Alabama Historical Commission named Painted Bluff to its “Places in Peril” list, which highlights the most significant endangered landmarks in the state. This endeavor brought statewide attention to the much needed conservation issues at the site.

“Painted Bluff is remarkable because it is incredibly rare for 600 year old rock art to be preserved in the South’s humid climate,” said Stacye Hathorn, State Archaeologist, Alabama Historical Commission. “There are at least 80 glyphs rendered in natural pigment on the rock surface at Painted Bluff.”

In 2014, TVA hired consultant Johannes Loubser and his firm Stratum Unlimited to study the site. Loubser’s report recommended a multifaceted approach to resolving the problems, including removal and camouflaging of the existing graffiti, along with more public involvement and outreach.



*Dr. Loubser removing graffiti from the 500-year-old Native American cliff art.*



*Partners who received the prestigious national award. Stacye Hathorn, State Archaeologist, traveled to Washington, DC, to accept the award on behalf of the Alabama Historical Commission.*

In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, TVA next consulted with the Alabama Historical Commission and 15 federally recognized Indian tribes on restoration of the petroglyphs and pictographs. The tribes recommended that artwork impacted through natural means be left alone, and that the focus should instead be on ongoing human impacts to the site—in particular, those caused by rock climbing.

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Read more about the Painted Bluff project at  
[Advisory Council on Historic Preservation press release](#)  
[TVA article](#)

**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 of safeguarding Alabama's historic buildings and sites. The Commission is tasked with the acquisition and preservation of historic properties and educating the public about historic sites in Alabama. For a complete list of properties owned and operated by the AHC, hours of operation, and admission fees please visit [www.ahc.alabama.gov](http://www.ahc.alabama.gov)

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