Randolph County

Comprising approximately 580 square miles, Randolph County is among Alabama's smallest counties. It lies in the east central part of the state in the Piedmont physiographic section. Randolph County is bordered by Georgia to the east, Cleburne County to the north, Clay County to the west, Tallapoosa County to the southeast, and Chambers County to the south.

Sitting on the Piedmont Plateau, Randolph County has relatively poor soil but a great deal of mineral wealth. Before the Civil War, farmers focused primarily on livestock and subsistence agriculture. Cotton became an important economic commodity in the 1860s and remained so until the mid-1940s. Although Randolph County sits on a great deal of minerals—including gold, copper, mica, and kaolin—the high costs of mining proved prohibitive throughout the nineteenth century. Consequently, few mining operations were attempted until the twentieth century.

The Tallapoosa River and its many tributaries offer visitors a range of recreational opportunities and scenic views. The R. L. Harris Dam forms the 10,000-acre Lake Wedowee on the Upper Tallapoosa and provides more than 270 miles of shoreline. The Talladega National Forest meets the northwest boundary of Randolph County and offers hunting, hiking, camping, bird watching, and picnicking. The Roanoke Downtown Historic District has a number of architecturally significant buildings in the Renaissance and Romanesque styles, many of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Roanoke also has a historical museum preserving artifacts from the entire county.

Super Site Selection Criteria

Randolph County was selected as a Super Site for this series on the basis of information reported in *Rocks and Minerals of Alabama – A Guide for Alabama Rockhounds (Circular 38, 1966)*.

The guide identified two minerals—galena and sphalerite—as being prominent in the Cragsford area near the "Old Benjamin Prospect", which is about 200 yards southeast of the railroad station.

Featured Rocks and Minerals

Galena – Note: this mineral was previously profiled in the Calhoun County section of the *Learning Series: Alabama's Rocks and Minerals – "The Super Sites"*. Please see the March 2012 issue for complete details. It is available at: www.wiregrassrockhounds.com.

Sphalerite – Note: this mineral was previously profiled in the Calhoun County section of the *Learning Series: Alabama's Rocks and Minerals – "The Super Sites"*. Please see the March 2012 issue for complete details. It is available at: www.wiregrassrockhounds.com.

Additional Minerals of Randolph County

In addition to galena and sphalerite, the www.mindat.org website currently lists the presence of 43 other mineral specimens in Randolph County: actinolite, albite (var: oligoclase), almandine, anglesite, ankerite, 'apatite', arsenolite, arsenopyrite, beryl (var: aquamarine), biotite, carminite, chalcopyrite, 'chlorite group', copper, 'garnet', gold, greenalite, 'hornblende', ilmenite, kaolinite, kyanite, limonite, magnetite, microcline, muscovite, pharmacosiderite, pitticite, pyrite, pyrope (var: rhodolite), pyrrhotite, quartz, rutile, schorl, scorodite, siderite, sillimanite, staurolite, sulphur, talc, topaz, 'tourmaline', tremolite, and zoisite.

Over 140 mines are on record in Randolph County. Most sites are clustered along a north/south oriented line that is just to the east of Hollis Crossroads, Delta and Cragford.

Sources:
http://www.mindat.org/lsearch.php?from=nsearch&loc=alabama
http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1300

Talladega County

Consisting of more than 750 square miles, Talladega County lies in the Coosa River Valley at the southern end of the Appalachian mountain range. A line running southwest to northeast divides the county between the Valley and Ridge physiographic section to the north and the Piedmont physiographic section to the south. Talladega County is bordered by Calhoun County to the north, Clay and Cleburne counties to the east, Coosa County to the south, and Shelby and St. Clair counties to the west. The Coosa River, one of the most utilized rivers in the state, runs throughout the county.

Like most of Alabama, farming was the prevailing occupation of Talladega County until well into the twentieth century. Although the limestone valleys were cleared for farming wheat and other crops, the Talladega National Forest at the eastern edge of the county remains heavily wooded with oak and pine trees. Those 375,000 acres of upland hills and low mountains provide habitat for a diverse array of wildlife. When combined with portions of the Cheaha Wilderness and Cheaha State Park, visitors can enjoy everything from panoramic views to fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, and picnicking.

In addition, the county's cities and towns host significant historic districts and a variety of attractions. Sometimes known as "The Marble City" because it sits on a solid deposit of hard, white marble, Sylacauga is home to one of the largest marble quarries in the South. Childersburg is home to the stalactite- and stalagmite-rich Desoto Caverns and the 140 year old Kymulga Grist Mill and covered bridge. Perhaps the most popular modern attraction in the county is the Talladega Superspeedway, one of the biggest, fastest, and most competitive motorsports facilities in the world.

Super Site Selection Criteria

Talladega County was selected as a Super Site for this series on the basis of information reported in *Rocks and Minerals of Alabama – A Guide for Alabama Rockhounds (Circular 38, 1966)*.

The guide identified three minerals—calcite, marble, and pyrite—as being prominent in the Sylacauga area near Gantts Quarry, just off Talladega County Road 8 about 1.5 miles west of town.

Featured Rocks and Minerals

Calcite – Note: this mineral was previously profiled in the Limestone County section of the *Learning Series: Alabama's Rocks and Minerals – "The Super Sites"*. Please see the September 2012 issue for complete details. It is available at: www.wiregrassrockhounds.com.

Marble – Note: this mineral was previously profiled in the Lee County section of the *Learning Series: Alabama's Rocks and Minerals – "The Super Sites"*. Please see the August 2012 issue for complete details. It is available at: www.wiregrassrockhounds.com.

Pyrite – Note: this mineral was previously profiled in the Clay County section of the *Learning Series: Alabama's Rocks and Minerals – "The Super Sites"*. Please see the April 2012 issue for complete details. It is available at: www.wiregrassrockhounds.com.

Additional Minerals of Talladega County

In addition to calcite, marble and pyrite, the www.mindat.org website currently lists the presence of 18 other mineral specimens in Talladega County: barite, chalcopyrite, 'chlorite group', copper, dolomite, enargite, gibbsite, goethite, gold, hematite (var: specularite), 'hornblende', kaolinite, limonite, magnetite, pyrolusite, quartz (var: chert), silver, and talc.

Over 180 mines are on record in Talladega County. They are spread uniformly across the county from north to south and from east to west. The great majority of the mines are for trace amounts of iron.

Sources:
http://www.mindat.org/lsearch.php?from=nsearch&loc=alabama
http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1300