

Alabama's First Great Industrialist

Daniel Pratt was born in Temple, New Hampshire on July 20th, 1799 and raised in the rigors of a puritan home.

Educated in the schools of his native state, Daniel Pratt left home at the age of 16 when he was apprenticed to Mr. Putnam, a carpenter, in order to learn a trade. Mr. Putnam had financial troubles, mortgaged his home and released young Daniel from his apprenticeship. With a small kit of tools- a hammer, saw and level, he worked his way to Boston and approached the captain of a vessel sailing to Savannah. The ship's captain was taken with the young man, gave him free passage and when the ship arrived in port Savannah, loaned the young man \$25.00. Daniel Pratt never forgot that generosity and he later returned the loan. From Savannah, Daniel moved to Milledgeville, Georgia and worked as a carpenter. While in Milledgeville, Pratt's architectural genius came to the forefront as he designed and built some of the most outstanding antebellum homes in America.

In 1827, Daniel returned to his home in New Hampshire, where the first thing he did was to seek Mr. Putnam and give him the money to pay off his mortgaged home.

In 1831, Daniel Pratt went to Clinton, Georgia where he and Samuel Griswold entered into a business to manufacture cotton gins. In 1833, Daniel and his family moved to Autauga County, Alabama where he began building cotton gins in his own shop.

In 1836 Daniel Pratt purchased land on Autauga Creek which produced abundant waterpower to operate his machinery. There he built his empire's initial cotton gin factory, which was to bear his name for 67 years, until it became Continental Gin Company. That plant is still in existence today operating under the name of Continental Eagle Corporation. It continues to manufacture cotton gins in Prattville. The older building, in the complex of nine and a-half acres under roof, is the oldest continuous use industrial building in Alabama, maybe in the South.

In 1846, Daniel Pratt built a cotton mill and for many years was very successful. Today one remaining building stands on the site of Pratt's early cotton mill. Daniel added a flour mill, gristmill and woolen mill. The woolen mill became a bottle factory and experimental lab for cotton gin machinery in later years. By the year 1860, Pratt was manufacturing no less than 1500 cotton gins per year and making over \$500,000 a year from his various enterprises. Through his unbounding energies, Pratt became Alabama's first millionaire. Pratt purchased thousands of acres of land in north Alabama. He was one of the first to develop the coal and iron ore mines in Alabama and built blast furnaces in Oxmoor, near Birmingham. His son-in-law, Henry DeBardelaben, opened the Pratt ore mines. He helped start the South and North Alabama railroad. Pratt pioneered the making of iron in Shades Valley, Alabama. Pratt City in the Birmingham area was named in his honor. When the civil war started, he helped organized the "Alabama Arms Manufacturing Company" which later became the Red Mountain Iron and Coal Company in 1862.



Daniel, Pratt

1799-1873

Though he had been born a "Yankee", Daniel Pratt loved the South. When the civil war was approaching, a man from Robinson Springs organized a company of Calvary. Daniel Pratt generously furnished mounts and supplies. He furnished uniforms and outfitted the "Prattville Dragoons," which became part of the Third Alabama Cavalry, later serving under the command of General Joe Wheeler. The uniforms of this unit were so ornate officers of other units would salute the Dragoon privates. Daniel Pratt purchased hundreds of thousands of Confederate bonds to help his cause of states rights.

Daniel Pratt built the first free school in Alabama. In earlier days, the desks were around the wall. In Pratt's school, the desks were in rows as they are today. He built a print shop, blacksmith shop, window factory, carriage factory, tin factory, foundry, and had interests in banking.

Today the Continental Eagle factories, along the waters of Autauga Creek, are testimony to the New England Heritage of Daniel Pratt, with their roof lines, steeples and chimneys.

The vision of Daniel Pratt set the wheels in motion to create the steel and iron industries in Alabama. He is called "Alabama's First Great Industrialist". On May 13, 1873 Daniel Pratt died; because of his vision, his name and accomplishments live on today.

Daniel Pratt, pioneer, industrialist, architect, civic leader, and humanitarian

**Continental Eagle Corporation
Prattville, Alabama**

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