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## Book Review: Your Alabama and The Story of Alabama, by Virginia Van der Hamilton

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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BOOK REVIEWS

YOUR ALABAMA & THE STORY OF ALABAMA, by Virginia Van der Hamilton (Viewpoint Publications, Inc.)

Here are two excellent textbooks of Alabama history, designed for the fourth and ninth grades. Alabama history is a required subject throughout the state at those two levels. The basic difference between the two grades is the greater degree of detailed analysis offered in the upper one.

It is the author's contention that "awareness of history begins close to home" and her purpose in writing these textbooks is to "build upon a natural interest in the history of one's community . . . [for] a small stream leads to a river and an ocean, so the pursuit of local and state history can carry teachers and students into the history of this nation and of this world."

That she has admirably succeeded is due in no little part to her unique ability, in three times of academic scholarship, to write, to convey thoughts and moods as well as factual data. She learned to write as a journalist before turning to the academic world, acquiring her doctorate in history at the University of Alabama. Currently she is professor of history and head of the history department at the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

The textbooks are very well organized, divided into six sections, each comprising at least several chapters. Each chapter has a section devoted to places to visit and things to do within Alabama that students can choose from, and, if carried out either individually

or by groups, will make our past much more relevant to the student. Awareness is also heightened by the use of visual aids. Maps, sketches and photographs are integrated with the text, pleasing aesthetically and adding to the educating process.

Both these textbooks are highly recommended; not only for students but for adults, newcomers to the state as well as "home grown". We are, at last, getting first-rate histories of the state into the classroom.