1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Edmund Pettus Bridge

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: U.S. 80, MP 85.415 Not for publication:

City/Town: Selma Vicinity:

State: Alabama County: Dallas Code: 047 Zip Code: 36701

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	__	Building(s):	___
Public-Local:	__	District:	___
Public-State:	_X_	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	_X_
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
__	__ buildings
__	__ sites
1	__ structures
__	__ objects
1	__ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related (vehicular)

Current: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related (vehicular)

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: other: steel through arch bridge

MATERIALS:
Foundation:
Walls:
Roof:
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Summary

The Edmund Pettus Bridge meets National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 for its association with the civil rights movement, particularly the events of March 7, 1965, now known as "Bloody Sunday." On that day, law enforcement officers violently stopped members of the civil rights movement from crossing the bridge. The marchers were attempting to march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, to dramatize the need for voting rights legislation. Media coverage of the violent confrontation between law enforcement officers and the marchers produced a national outcry that pressured politicians to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Introduction

The city of Selma sits on a bluff overlooking the Alabama River. Built in 1940, the four-lane Edmund Pettus Bridge crosses the river and is the main approach to Selma, Alabama, along U.S. Route 80, the principle road between Selma and Montgomery. The bridge is a metal through and concrete open spandrel-arch bridge, 1248'6" in length, and is composed of eleven spans (numbered 1-11 from west to east). Each span is composed of an arch that springs from concrete piers. The central span (span two) contains a through arch that has foundations below the road deck and ribs that pierce said road deck so that the crown is above it. This sole through arch is the bridge's most notable feature and is located roughly midway across the Alabama River. The other spans feature open-spandrel arches located completely below the road deck and attached by columns to the road deck. Selma sits on a bluff which makes the banks of the river uneven, the Selma (west) side is at a higher elevation than the east side. Because of the differing heights between the two banks, the bridge is not evenly centered over the Alabama River. The approach from the east, going towards Selma, is longer than the reverse. Consequently, there are nine spans to the east of the through arch and only one span to the west. The spans increase in length as one approached the through arch, which is the longest span.

Through Arch

The steel through arch is the most prominent feature of the bridge. The arch, which is painted light green, extends the length of the longest span (span two). The foundations of the through arch are below the deck and the crown is above the deck. Steel hangers suspend the deck from the arch. Bracing along the crown connects the two ribs of the arch. The steel bracing resembles a net and is composed of three rows of six rectangular openings. As cars pass under the bracing (traveling both east and west), passengers can see the name of the bridge, spelled out in raised bronze letters on the cross struts closest to the roadway.

Open Spandrel Arches

The open spandrel arches below the road deck spring from uniform concrete piers. These piers taper as they extend up. The piers continue through the road deck and each pier is capped by a concrete post on the deck of the bridge. The ten open-spandrel arches vary in length from 154'6" to 41'6". The spans increase in length as they near the through arch. To retain an open spandrel a series of concrete columns direct the load of the deck to the arch below. The columns are evenly spaced within each span and continue above the deck to become the concrete posts that support the steel railings. Like the piers, the columns are capped by a concrete post on the deck of the bridge

Roadway on Bridge

The bridge carries four lanes of traffic, two eastbound and two westbound, over the river. The total exterior width of the deck measures 56'4.8". A raised concrete median strip dividing the east and west bound lanes of

traffic, runs the length of the bridge. A sidewalk runs along the outer edge of both the east and west bound lanes. Railing along the outer edge of the sidewalk is composed of rectangular, evenly-spaced concrete posts (the posts extend below the road deck to become the columns, which connect the arches to the road deck) connected by a cast-iron frame. This frame supports ornamental plates and vertical iron bars of alternating heights. The ornamental plates flank the concrete posts and feature a geometric art deco design of two stacked kites and chevrons. Modern street lights replaced the original light posts sometime after 1940 but prior to 1965.

Portion of U.S.80 East of Edmund Pettus Bridge

Where U.S.80 crosses the Alabama River and continues towards Montgomery, frontage roads emerge from each side of U.S.80. Grassy medians separate the frontage roads from U.S.80. These roads provide access to businesses located on each side of the highway. Comparisons of photographs taken on Bloody Sunday and today demonstrate that some buildings present in 1965 are extant. For example, photographs from that day show John Lewis meeting law enforcement officers with the Haisten's Mattress and Awning Company in the background. This building is now an automotive paint and body shop. The Glass House Café, seen in the background of photographs of Amelia Boynton on Bloody Sunday, is also still present. Other buildings, such as the Selma Tractor Company, which can be seen in the background of 1965 images of mounted troopers, are no longer extant.

Integrity

The Edmund Pettus Bridge and the portion of U.S.80 east of the bridge have a high degree of all seven aspects of integrity and convey their historical significance. As in 1965, the bridge carries U.S.80 over the Alabama River and is the main approach to Selma from the east. The location of the bridge, includingU.S.80, has remained the same since its construction in 1940. Comparisons between the construction plans and the bridge today demonstrate that the bridge retains integrity of design as does U.S.80. The overall design and decorative details of the bridge and U.S.80 are the same as when they were first constructed and during their period of significance. Although the bridge's setting has changed with time, the character of the setting remains the same as it was in 1965. The bridge remains the main approach to Selma, which is still a small town with a modest skyline. To the east, the landscape still features small-scale commercial buildings. Photographs show that some of these buildings date to 1965, while others are replacements. The bridge and U.S.80 receive routine maintenance; however, they have not undergone any significant construction or renovations and retain integrity of materials. Constructed mainly of machine-manufactured steel and concrete parts, the bridge displays its original engineering workmanship. The same is true for U.S.80 which was paved in asphalt during the period of significance and today. The Edmund Pettus Bridge has become synonymous with Bloody Sunday and the civil rights movement. Annual commemorations of Bloody Sunday help reinforce connections between the event and the bridge and contribute to the bridge's integrity of association. The bridge and U.S.80 have integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling. The bridge and U.S.80 still serve their historic function of connecting Selma to Montgomery.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: _ Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A X B_ C_ D
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F X G
NHL Criteria:	1
NHL Criteria Exceptions:	8
NHL Theme(s):	II. Creating Social Institutions and Movement 2. Reform movements IV. Shaping the Political Landscape 1. Parties, protests, and movements
Areas of Significance:	Ethnic Heritage, Black Law Politics/Government Social History
Period(s) of Significance:	March 7, 1965-March 21, 1965
Significant Dates:	March 7, 1965 (Bloody Sunday) March 9, 1965 (Turn-around Tuesday) March 21, 1965 (March proceeds under Federal protection)
Significant Person(s):	N/A
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Architect/Builder:	Henson K. Stephenson
Historic Contexts:	*Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights National Historic Landmarks Theme Study* (March, 2007; revised 2009)

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Edmund Pettus Bridge is eligible for National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation under Criterion 1 for its association with the events of March 7, 1965, now known as "Bloody Sunday." On March 7, 1965, an attack by local and state law enforcement officers on peaceful marchers crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, en route to the state capitol in Montgomery contributed to the introduction and passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Television and newspaper coverage of what became known as "Bloody Sunday" shocked the American public and dramatized the need for voting rights legislation, prompting President Lyndon Johnson to announce he was sending new voting rights legislation to Congress. The United States Department of Justice has called the Voting Rights Act the single most effective piece of civil rights legislation ever passed by Congress.[1]

The bridge is also being nominated under NHL Exception 8 for achieving extraordinary national significance within the last 50 years for its direct association with the introduction and passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

African American Voting Rights Background[2]

The end of the Civil War and the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, did not result in full citizenship for African Americans. In the former Confederacy, many of the same leaders who were in power before the Civil War enacted discriminatory laws designed to limit the freedoms of African Americans and ensure racial inequality. Laws, called the "Black Codes," prohibited African Americans from testifying against whites, determined in which sections of town African Americans could live, and created barriers to African American economic independence.[3] In 1867, Congress adopted the Fourteenth Amendment. Although the Amendment did not expressly address African Americans it did redefine citizenship to include, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States." African Americans were therefore granted constitutional rights, such as due process and equal protection under the law. In addition, the Fourteenth Amendment established penalties for non-compliance. States that did not allow all men over the age of 21 to vote could have their representation in the House of Representatives reduced. However, southern politicians took advantage of weaknesses in the constitutional amendments and continued to deny African Americans access to the ballot.

The Military Reconstruction acts attempted to force the former Confederate states to comply with Federal law by placing Federal troops in the South and requiring congressional approval for new state constitutions and ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. This system enabled African American men to participate in the political process, and, as a result, a number of southern black men obtained positions of authority as elected officials. In 1870, adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment further solidified the rights of African Americans. The amendment prohibited voter discrimination based on "race, color, or previous condition of servitude" and gave Congress the power to create legislation to enforce the Amendment. Unlike Military Reconstruction, the Fifteenth Amendment applied to the entire country.

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[1] United States Department of Justice, "Voting Section," http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/ (accessed June 8, 2011).

[2] This summary of the efforts of African Americans to obtain the vote is largely drawn from Steven Lawson, "The Enfranchisement of African Americans in the U.S," in Neil Foley, Peter Iverson, Steven F. Lawson, and Susan Cianci Salvatore, *Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights National Historic Landmarks Theme Study* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007).

[3] Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Viking, 2001), 3.

Although the Federal government made legislative strides to enfranchise African American men, certain state governments—buttressed by racist and often violent groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of the White Camellia—worked systematically to reverse anti-racist political reform. Discriminatory practices and laws, known collectively as "redemption," included: literacy and understanding tests, poll taxes, good character vouchers, secret ballot (essentially a literacy test), grandfather clauses, gerrymandering, and intimidation. "Redemption" effectively eliminated the southern African American vote by the beginning of the twentieth century.

African Americans initiated numerous efforts to attain equality in the first half of the twentieth century. Formed in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked to secure the vote for African Americans mainly through judicial means. A major achievement of the NAACP was the elimination of the white primary. In a 1944 case, *Smith v. Allwright*, NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall successfully argued that exclusion from the primary violated the Fifteenth Amendment and was tantamount to disenfranchisement. Other groups, like the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW), and the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax (NCAPT), worked to eliminate the poll tax, a practice which was just as problematic for poor white southerners as it was to African Americans.

World War II served as a catalyst for voting rights. J. L. Chestnut Jr., Selma's first black lawyer, remembered Selma's black World War II veterans as set apart from other African Americans in Selma. According to Chestnut, the veterans, whom he described as "restless," were more willing than other men to protest unfair treatment. Although the U.S. military was still segregated and relegated African Americans to service positions, when on leave, African American soldiers were exposed to northern cities. In the North, African American servicemen experienced greater freedoms than they had in the South, and they saw other African Americans working in positions of authority, such as policemen and bus drivers.

Chestnut recalls that "[t]hey [Selma's African American veterans] talked about Harlem all the time, and we younger boys were all ears because we thought Harlem was just the ticket." According to Chestnut, Selma's black veterans expressed a desire to leave the South, "'I'm going out to Selma University on the GI Bill and I'm going to get my diploma and I'm going to get my ass to Detroit,' they'd say. 'I'm not going to put up with this damn crap here'."[4] The migration of millions of African American southerners to the North, where blacks could vote, gave them some political leverage.[5] Ideologically, World War II also advanced efforts to attain voting rights. The hypocrisy of the U.S. government, which sent black soldiers to fight for democratic principles in Europe, and then denied them participation in the democratic process at home, spurred various grassroots voting projects.

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools violated the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, another success in the NAACP's effort to achieve racial equality through litigation, called for an end to racial segregation in public schools. This decision reversed the longstanding policy of "separate but equal" that was established in 1896 by the Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. As a result of the *Brown* decision, racial tensions in the South were amplified. White Citizen Councils, committed to resisting integration, became more widespread and organized. Mirroring their constituents' displeasure, 101 southern congressmen signed the "Southern Manifesto," which criticized the *Brown* decision and vowed to resist its implementation.

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[4] J. L. Chestnut and Julia Cass, *Black in Selma: the Uncommon Life of J. L. Chestnut, Jr.* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), 36-37.

[5] Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 87-93, 185-95.

As some white southerners resisted integration, African Americans formed direct action organizations such as the northern Congress of Racial Equality (CORE, 1942), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC, 1957), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, 1960). These groups sought political, social, and economic rights: the right to vote and hold political office, the right to patronize places of public accommodation and transportation, equal access to education, fair and equal employment and housing opportunities. Members of the civil rights movement employed legal challenges, education and training, political activity, and nonviolent protest to gain full citizenship.

In 1957, the Eisenhower administration and Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1957. According to historian Steven Lawson, the 1957 Act was the result of a confluence of events. Following the *Brown* decision, a number of events brought southern race relations to national prominence. In August 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old African American from Chicago, was lynched while visiting relatives in Money, Mississippi. The trial and subsequent acquittal of Till's killers were widely covered by both the black and white media. In light of the Cold War and Soviet propaganda, the global attention the trial received was particularly embarrassing to the Eisenhower administration. A few months after Till's trial, African Americans in Montgomery, Alabama, initiated a direct action campaign to protest the segregated seating policy of Montgomery buses. The yearlong boycott successfully ended the discriminatory seating policy and elevated its leader, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to national prominence.

The Civil Rights Act of 1957 created the Civil Rights Division within the Department of Justice and gave the Attorney General authority to seek injunctions against violations of the Fifteenth Amendment. However, the 1957 Act did not significantly impact black voter registration. Southern election officials still used their own discretion to determine who met voter registration requirements. Based solely on race, a white applicant was more likely than a black applicant to pass any qualifying tests.

The Federal government sought to redress the weaknesses of the 1957 Act by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1960. The 1960 Act mandated the preservation of election records, allowed records to be examined by the Justice Department, and gave Federal courts the authority to appoint a voter referee who could reconsider rejected applications.

Ever conscience of comparisons between American Democracy and Soviet Communism, the administration of President John F. Kennedy wanted to avoid the negative publicity of demonstrations and protests. Hoping to engage civil rights workers in voter registration rather than public protest, the Kennedy administration worked to arrange financing for voter registration drives such as the Voter Education Project (VEP), an effort funded by philanthropic groups and managed by the civil rights organization, Southern Regional Council (SRC). However, without the support of Federal law enforcement officers those attempting to register voters faced the usual dangers associated with civil rights activities in the South.

Civil rights groups also worked to demonstrate the disparity between African Americans who wanted to vote and those who were registered to vote. The Freedom Vote, a mock election organized by the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), was planned to coincide with the Mississippi gubernatorial election of 1963. Nearly four times more African Americans in Mississippi participated in the mock election than were registered to vote in Mississippi. The mock election also showed that African Americans in Mississippi, especially those in rural counties, faced major obstacles to political participation. Following the Freedom Vote, COFO began organizing for the Freedom Summer of 1964. Freedom Summer was a concentrated effort to increase African American voter registration in Mississippi. Volunteers, many of whom were white college students, were recruited and trained in the non-violent philosophy and methods of the civil rights movement. Shortly after Freedom Summer had begun, three workers, Michael Schwerner and James Chaney of CORE, and Andrew

Goodman, a summer volunteer from Queens, New York, were reported missing. Their disappearance drew national attention to the Freedom Summer campaign. It was later determined that members of the Ku Klux Klan, aided by local law enforcement, had murdered the three men. The Freedom Summer also helped to launch the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). Prohibited from participating in the state Democratic Party, African Americans formed the MFDP, which was open to all Mississippians. Like the Freedom Vote, an aim of the MFDP was to demonstrate the desire of African Americans to vote. The MFDP drew considerable media attention to the cause of disenfranchised black Mississippians when party members traveled to the 1964 Democratic presidential nominating convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and attempted to seat delegates.

The Kennedy administration chose to support voter registration through the courts, but although the Justice Department actively pursued civil rights cases, it had little effect. As Nicholas Katzenbach, U.S. Attorney General under President Lyndon Johnson later explained:

> The Justice Department was empowered by earlier legislation to sue, but it had to sue on behalf of individuals who were discriminated against when they attempted to register to vote. This meant, essentially, that you had to bring a separate lawsuit for each person who was discriminated against, and there were thousands. It would take years to get them registered to vote. It simply was not a solution to the problem.[6]

There were other obstacles as well. In some cases, local registrars simply refused to hand records over to the Justice Department. When the Justice Department did receive records, it was difficult for them to meet the high degree of proof required to demonstrate violations of the law. Furthermore, sympathetic southern courts slowed progress by causing deliberate delays.[7] The 1964 Civil Rights Act, best known for its provisions regarding access to public accommodations and withholding Federal funds from schools that discriminated, also contained voting rights provisions; but like the 1957 Act, the 1960 and 1964 acts proved ineffective in enforcing voting rights. King biographer and civil rights historian, David Garrow, writes that, as a result of these circumstances, "no significant increase in black registration occurred between 1957 and 1965 in the hard-core states of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi against which the Justice Department brought the great majority of its voting suits."[8] Failed attempts to bring about change through litigation demonstrated that meaningful legislation was needed to give African Americans access to the ballot.

The SCLC and the Media

A day after Lyndon Johnson's 1964 election, civil rights leader and president of the SCLC, Martin Luther King Jr., announced his commitment to work towards voting rights, stating that the SCLC would "probably have demonstrations in the very near future in Alabama and Mississippi, based around the right to register and vote."[9] The SCLC had a history of employing tactics which often led to confrontations between law enforcement officers and protesters and drew media attention to civil rights issues.

David Garrow has argued that as the civil rights movement progressed, King and the SCLC employed increasingly confrontational tactics, and that the three major SCLC campaigns—Albany, Georgia; Birmingham,

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[6] Nicholas Katzenbach quoted in, Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn, comp. , *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 212.

[7] David Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 22, 28.

[8] Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 30.

[9] David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 358.

Alabama; and Selma, Alabama—show the evolution of SCLC's strategy.[10] The SCLC's first campaign in Albany was frustrated by the lack of a villain. Albany's sheriff, Laurie Pritchett, quietly arrested protesters in a way that attracted very little media attention. By contrast, in Birmingham, Alabama, the violent actions of Sheriff Bull Connor drew national media attention, but there was no single potent symbol which represented this struggle. The Selma campaign included a Bull Connor figure and, together with its easily identifiable aim of voting rights, members of the civil rights movement were able to succinctly (in a sound bite) communicate this goal to the media and the public.
Selma's sheriff, Jim Clark, would prove to be an especially potent symbol of the unfair conditions of the South. Clark's manner and appearance worked to the advantage of the civil rights movement:

> Jim Clark, by contrast, [in contrast to Laurie Pritchett] was perfect. With his greater ambition had come a new military look; he sometimes wore a helmet liner, which, as the mayor of Selma noted, recalled visions of George Patton, although John Nixon, then a Justice Department field officer, thought he looked more like a second-tier Latin American dictator. Then there was a jacket patterned after the one Dwight Eisenhower had worn in World War II. Every move of his seemed to bear the mark of the bully . . . It was, thought Bernard Lafayette, who had tangled with Clark often, as if he were trying to play John Wayne in a movie where the Duke was a white segregationist sworn to uphold the good America and the black protesters were the bad guys trying to tear it down.[11]

Sheriff Clark also maintained a "sheriff's posse."[12] In his 1966 book, Clark characterized his posse:

> The sheriff's posse in Dallas County is made up of volunteers who serve without pay during any emergency that requires more law enforcement officers than I can supply with my nine full-time deputies. They furnish their own uniforms and equipment. They must meet rigid standards of personal character, background and physical fitness. They are recommended to me by a completely independent screening committee of five leading citizens of the county.[13]

Clark and his posse would prove to be a valuable foil to the multitude of well-dressed and well-behaved African Americans who were protesting for voting rights. Clark's usefulness as a symbol of the unfair southern justice system was so effective that an SCLC staffer jokingly suggested Clark be added to the SCLC staff.[14]

By 1965, King and the SCLC had become skilled at using the media as a tool to gain public support. King understood that the media amplified the efforts of the movement. Exposing a single injustice to the lens of a camera demonstrated the institutional and systemic racism of the South to the world. To further the aims of the civil rights movement, King and the SCLC courted and accommodated the media. For example, during the Birmingham campaign the SCLC scheduled demonstrations in the mornings so that television crews could meet their 2 p.m. evening news deadlines.[15] Selma's close proximity to Montgomery allowed network reporters to

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[10] Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 2-4.

[11] David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York: Fawcett Book, 1999), 489-90.

[12] Sheriff Clark applied the appellation "posse" to the group of deputized volunteers under his command. The term was used in contemporary reporting of the civil rights movement in Selma and historians have maintained its use. Although the term may imply extra-legal mob rule, Sheriff Clark did deputize the posse and they operated under his authority. This nomination will maintain the historic use of the term.

[13] Jim Clark, *The Jim Clark Story* (Birmingham, AL: Selma Enterprises: Distributed by the Sizemore Agency, 1996), 19-20.

[14] Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 380.

[15] Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 311.

file their daily stories on time.[16] During the Selma campaign, when King heard that *Life* magazine photographer, Flip Schulke, put down his camera to intervene on behalf of children being intimidated by Jim Clark's posse, King later rebuked Schulke, telling him, "The world doesn't know this happened, because you didn't photograph it. I am not being cold-blooded about it, but it is so much more important for you to take a picture of us getting beaten up than for you to be another person joining the fray."[17] The public outcry as a result of Bloody Sunday would prove King's attitude towards the media to be correct.

Selma, Alabama

Selma, Alabama, located on the banks of the Alabama River, is the seat of Dallas County and a major city of the Black Belt. Stretching from south-central Alabama to northwest Mississippi the Black Belt derives its name from its rich and dark soil. The soil, which is the result of the weathering of exposed limestone known as "Selma Chalk," has shaped the economic, political, and cultural history of the region. Following the Federal government's removal of American Indians from Alabama in the 1820s and 30s, white planters were drawn to the fertile soil of the Black Belt. There they established cotton plantations and imported large numbers of enslaved African Americans to work the cotton fields.

Following the Civil War and emancipation, agriculture remained Selma's major economic enterprise. Many African Americans, who had been formerly enslaved in and around Selma, worked as sharecroppers for white land owners. During Reconstruction, African Americans were elected to a number of offices (U.S. congressman, state senator, criminal court judge, four city councilmen, five county commissioners, tax assessor, and coroner). But, as was the case across the South, Selma was eventually "redeemed" by white Democrats. Political offices held by African Americans were abolished or electoral districts were redrawn to create white majorities. In 1901, white politicians introduced a poll tax and educational and property requirements to the Alabama constitution. These requirements effectively disenfranchised African Americans in Alabama.[18] Decades after the Civil War, in the 1960s, the Black Belt retained the social structure that had been established in the nineteenth century. African Americans had little to no political power and were for the most part economically dependent on whites.

Early Voting Rights Efforts in Selma

In the 1920s, African Americans of Dallas County established the Dallas County Voters League (DCVL) to increase African American political participation. The league languished shortly after its formation, but it was revived and eventually headed by Samuel W. Boynton.[19] Boynton and his wife, Amelia, both graduates of the black Tuskegee Institute, had originally come to Selma as employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; she as a Home Demonstration Agent and he as an Agricultural Extension Agent. The Boyntons instructed applicants on how to correctly complete the voter application and Sam Boynton served as a "voucher" (each applicant needed a registered voter to vouch for the applicant's good character and residency).[20] Despite the efforts of the DCVL, the majority of African Americans in Dallas County were not able to meet the registrar's requirements for voter registration. In 1960, Dallas County was home to 14,400 white and 15,115 non-white people of voting age. Of that number, 9,463 whites and 320 non-whites were registered to vote.[21]

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[16] Halberstam, *Children*, 487.

[17] King quoted in Roberts and Klibanoff, *Race Beat*, 383.

[18] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*, 3-7.

[19] National Park Service, *Selma to Montgomery Historic Trail Study* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1993), 10. Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (New York: Viking, 1987), 254. Williams states that the DCVL was formed in the 1930s.

[20] Henry Hampton et al., *Voices of Freedom*, 211.

[21] United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Political Participation: A Study of the Participation by Negroes in the Electoral and Political Processes in 10 Southern States since Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1968), Table 4,

Dallas County attracted the attention of John Doar, First Assistant in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice**,** for several reasons. Doar intended to file suit under Section (a) of the 1957 Civil Rights Act in each southern Federal court district. If Doar could prove racial discrimination, he could obtain an injunction against a local official. Doar selected Dallas County because it was a large county with a clear history of voter discrimination and a high rural African American population. Large counties provided more potential witnesses because rural African Americans, often independent farmers, were less vulnerable to economic retaliation than middle-class African Americans who were often employed by whites. Amelia Boynton provided Doar with a ready-made list of witnesses, her "honor roll" of potential black voters—a list of clearly qualified African Americans the local registrar had rejected.[22]

On April 13, 1961, Doar initiated litigation against the Dallas County Board of Registrars.[23] Uncooperative registrars and the dilatory practices of local judges impeded the department's efforts. Eventually, in November 1962, Judge Daniel H. Thomas ruled that although discrimination had existed in the past, the current board, which had been instated after the initial suit, was acting fairly. Although Judge Thomas instructed the registrars to allow rejected black applicants to reapply after 60 days, he also took time to chide the Justice Department for bringing the suit.[24]

Like the Department of Justice, national civil rights organizations were attracted to Selma. In February 1963, Bernard Lafayette, a veteran of the 1960 Nashville Student Movement and the 1962 Freedom Rides to desegregate public accommodations and transportation respectively, along with his wife, Colia Lafayette, another movement veteran, came to Selma as representatives of SNCC. Previous SNCC workers had failed to register a single black voter in Selma, and because of the intense fear felt by the black community, the organization held little hope of making progress in the city.[25] Lafayette began his work in Selma with small meetings formed mainly from DCVL members. Fear of white reprisals prevented blacks from openly supporting efforts for voter registration, so Lafayette targeted blacks who were economically independent of whites: retirees with social security benefits, former members of the military, farmers, and students. Sam Boynton's death, of natural causes, occasioned the first opportunity for Lafayette to hold a large-scale public meeting.[26]

The May 14, 1963, mass meeting in honor of Sam Boynton attracted a substantial audience, and the attention of Selma's sheriff, Jim Clark. With a court order to maintain public safety, Clark and his posse of deputized locals, entered the Tabernacle Baptist Church, photographed the 350 attendees, barred more mourners from entering, and smashed cars' taillights so that their black owners could be pulled over, intimidated, and ticketed the next day. Clark's methods proved advantageous to Lafayette— the sheriff's behavior enraged the black community and motivated them to participate in the civil rights movement.[27] Gradually Lafayette, Amelia Boynton, DCVL members, and other leaders, cultivated a confident community of activists in Selma.

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[22] Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 409-10.

[23] Stephen Tuck, "Making the Voting Rights Act," in *The Voting Rights Act*, ed. Richard M. Valley, 77-94 (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006), 81; Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 31.

[24] Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 31.

[25] Halberstam, *Children*, 411, 421.

[26] Ibid, 422-23.

[27] Ibid, 424.

SCLC Voting Rights Campaign in Selma

On January 2, 1965, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at Brown Chapel (NHL, 1998) in Selma. His speech marked the official beginning of the SCLC's Selma voting rights campaign.[28] King had been invited to speak by the DCVL. As Andrew Young, then of the SCLC, recalled, "Selma was not a place that we picked out. We did not choose them. They chose us."[29] Numerous registration drives and meetings had preceded King's January 2, 1965, speech. SNCC chairman, John Lewis, had led an earlier registration attempt on July 6, 1964. Sheriff Clark arrested Lewis and 50 others, and circuit judge James A. Hare banned meetings of three or more people if sponsored by the SCLC, SNCC, or certain individuals, including Lewis and Amelia Boynton.[30]

King, president of the SCLC, openly defied the court order banning meetings of three or more when he addressed the crowd of 700 at Brown Chapel. At the meeting, King proclaimed the beginning of a "determined, organized, mobilized campaign to get the right to vote everywhere in Alabama." In his speech, King identified the aims of the campaign:

> If they refuse to register us, we will appeal to Governor Wallace. If he doesn't listen, we will appeal to the legislature. If the legislature doesn't listen, we will seek to arouse the Federal Government by marching by the thousands to the places of registration. We must be willing to go to jail by the thousands. We are not asking, we are demanding the Ballot.[31]

Following King's arrival, events in Selma progressed quickly. Although the media had previously reported on events in Selma before King's arrival, his presence brought added attention. In October 1964, Claude Sitton, the *New York Times* national editor, had instructed that, "King was to be covered by a *Times* reporter anywhere he went in the South on a civil rights mission."[32] The appearance of a *New York Times* reporter guaranteed the presence of other reporters as well. And so, as King began to campaign for voting rights in Selma, the media and America were watching.

On January 14, 1965, King announced to a crowd of 800 that a direct action campaign involving registration attempts and the testing of desegregation laws would begin in four days. On January 18, which SCLC had proclaimed as freedom day, King and John Lewis led approximately 400 African Americans to the Dallas County Courthouse, and King registered as the first black guest of the Albert Hotel. While registering at the hotel, a member of the white supremacists' National States' Rights Party physically attacked King. Selma's public safety commissioner, Wilson Baker, quickly arrested King's attacker, and the rest of the day passed without a major event. Movement leaders, who recognized that through media attention they would win the sympathy of the American public and bring political pressure to bear, pronounced the calmness of the day a "disappointment." During an SCLC staff meeting at the Albert Hotel, SCLC leadership decided that if Jim Clark did not "display his expected hostility," then the movement would change its focus to the towns of Marion and Camden.[33]

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[28] A chronology of the Selma Voting Rights Campaign is provided in Appendix A of the NHL theme study *Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights.*

[29] Andrew Young quoted in Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King Jr.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 290.

[30] Garrow, *Protest at Selma,* 34.

[31] Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America,* 229.

[32] Roberts and Klibanoff, *Race Beat,* 378.

[33] Garrow, *Protest at Selma,* 42.

The following day, January 19, 1965, Clark proved less "disappointing." During a demonstration in front of the courthouse, his rough handling of Amelia Boynton resulted in photographs on pages 18 and 10 of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, respectively.[34] The same day, Clark ordered the arrest of 67 marchers, including John Lewis and Hosea Williams. On January 20, Clark arrested more than 200 marchers in front of the courthouse.

On January 22, 1965, Reverend Frederick D. Reese, president of the DCVL, pastor of two churches, and a teacher at R. B. Hudson High School, led a march of 110 teachers from Clark Elementary School to the steps of the courthouse. The teachers' march was remarkable because in the history of the movement, so few teachers had been willing to make a public stand and risk their status and positions. When the teachers arrived at the courthouse, the school board chairman and the superintendent of schools tried to convince the teachers to cease their protest. When the teachers refused to comply with their employers' request, Jim Clark confronted the teachers. Having taken a stand, the teachers marched to Brown Chapel where they were greeted with an ovation and freedom songs.[35]

Following a week of more marches and arrests, SCLC leadership decided that King should be arrested. On Monday February 1, 1965, King led 250 marchers to the courthouse disobeying the city's parade ordinance that required marchers to break into smaller groups. King and his close associate, Pastor Ralph Abernathy, were among the 770 arrested that day.[36] During his arrest, King, through SCLC staff person Andrew Young, appealed to President Johnson to intervene in Selma. On Thursday, President Johnson issued a statement that fulfilled King's request:

> All Americans should be indignant when one American is denied the right to vote. The loss of that right to a single citizen undermines the freedom of every citizen. This is why all of us should be concerned with the efforts of our fellow Americans to register to vote in Alabama. The basic problem in Selma is the slow pace of voting registration for Negroes who are qualified to vote…[37]

On Friday, King, repeating his "letter from a Birmingham Jail," released a letter from jail in Selma. King's letter was published as an SCLC advertisement on page 15 of the *New York Times*, the same day that 15 congressional representatives arrived to assess the situation in Selma. The next week, King met with President Johnson. Following their meeting King reported that he was pleased with the conversation he had had with the President and was convinced that the President was committed to voting rights.[38]

To maintain pressure, on February 16, 1965, Reverend C. T. Vivian of SCLC organized a march from Brown Chapel to the Dallas County Courthouse where, in a scene captured by the national media, he was assaulted and arrested by Clark. Two days later, Vivian led another march, this time at night in the nearby town of Marion in Perry County. Alabama state troopers, under the command of Colonel Al Lingo, attacked the 450 marchers and injured several reporters. During the attack, troopers shot and fatally wounded 26-year-old Jimmie Lee Jackson who had been protecting his mother. Jackson's death prompted calls for dramatic action. At a mass meeting, James Bevel, architect of the SCLC's Birmingham campaign, called for a march to the Alabama capital to confront Governor George Wallace with Jackson's death.

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[34] Ibid., 43.

[35] Charles E. Fager, *Selma 1965: The March that Changed the South* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 30, 40; Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 44.

[36] Foley et al., *Racial Voting Rights*, Appendix A.

[37] Johnson quoted in Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 385.

[38] Ibid.

Bloody Sunday

On March 7, 1965, protesters gathered in fields near Brown Chapel Church, the starting point for the planned 54-mile march along U.S. 80 to Montgomery. The previous day, Governor Wallace had prohibited any march on U.S. 80, stating that such a march would threaten public safety. When questioned, Wallace added that state troopers would "use whatever measures are necessary to prevent a march."[39] According to John Lewis, the marchers "did *not* expect to march all the way to Montgomery." And they did expect to face some type of resistance.[40] In case of arrest, Lewis carried with him the necessities for a night in jail. In case of violence, marchers were given instructions in non-violent protection, ten doctors and nurses from the Medical Committee for Human Rights had flown in from New York, and ambulances were at the ready.[41] Andrew Young called Dr. King who instructed that only one of the three SCLC leaders present, Young, Hosea Williams, or James Bevel, should take part in the march and that the other two should remain behind in case of trouble. Hosea Williams was selected, by a coin toss, to lead the march as a representative of the SCLC and in place of Dr. King who was delivering Sunday service at his home church in Atlanta. John Lewis led the march with Williams.[42]

Before beginning the march, Lewis and Young addressed members of the press who had gathered at Brown Chapel. Young explained King's absence and Lewis stated the reasons for the march. Then, at 1:40 p.m., Lewis and Williams began the march. Public Safety Commissioner Baker quickly stopped the march and insisted that the marchers reorganize themselves to comply with Selma's parade ordinance. As requested, the marchers lined up double-file and formed approximately 24 groups of 25 people; a staff person was placed with each group to ensure proper spacing.[43] At approximately 2:18 p.m., Lewis and Williams started the march again, leading the double column of between 500 and 600 marchers towards Montgomery.[44] Marching behind Lewis and Williams were Albert Turner and Bob Mants. Turner was an SCLC field secretary and a local Perry County resident. Mants was a 21-year-old pre-med student at Morehouse College who had first joined the movement by volunteering as a janitor at the Atlanta SNCC headquarters. Many of the marchers who followed were local residents. Roughly 200 people came from Perry County,[45] Jimmie Lee Jackson's home county and where he had been fatally shot. Others came from Dallas, Lowndes, and Wilcox counties.

From their starting point at Brown Chapel, the marchers traveled south on Sylvan Street,[46] five blocks west on Alabama Avenue, and then south on Broad Street, which would lead them across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and onto U.S. 80.[47] In total, the marchers traveled about three-quarters of a mile. As the marchers began to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge, its steep arc prevented them from seeing the opposite side of the Alabama River. It was not until the marchers reached the apex of the bridge that they saw, in the words of John Lewis:

> . . . a sea of blue-helmeted, blue-uniformed Alabama state troopers, line after line of them, dozens of battle-ready lawmen stretched from one side of U.S. Highway 80 to the other. Behind them were several dozen more armed men—Sheriff Clark's posse—some on horseback, all wearing khaki clothing, many carrying clubs the size of baseball bats.[48]

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[39] Wallace quoted in Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 72.
[40] Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 324-25.
[41] Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 73.
[42] Because of internal conflicts within SNCC and conflicts between the SCLC and SNCC, Lewis, although at the time Chairman of SNCC, marched as an individual. Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 323-25.
[43] Branch, *At Canaan's Edge*, 48.
[44] There is no accurate count of participants. According to the *New York Times* there were 525 marchers.
[45] Branch, *At Canaan's Edge*, 42-44 and 51.
[46] Now Martin Luther King Jr. Street.
[47] National Park Service, *Selma to Montgomery Historic Trail Study*, 30-31.
[48] Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 326.

Meeting the marchers on the east side of the Edmund Pettus Bridge were Alabama state troopers, led by Major John Cloud; uniformed Sheriff's deputies; and Jim Clark's posse, about 15 of whom were on horseback. The approximately 150 law enforcement officers were positioned at the first traffic light after the bridge, in an unincorporated area of Dallas County known as Selmont.[49]

The position of law enforcement officers, outside Selma city limits, placed them beyond the jurisdiction of Selma's top law enforcement officer, Public Safety Commissioner Wilson Baker. In the eyes of John Lewis, Baker was analogous to Albany's Laurie Pritchett.[50] Throughout the Selma campaign Baker, who was in charge of the Selma City Police, had acted to control Jim Clark and avoid publicity. Selma's newly elected mayor, Joseph T. Smitherman, had hired Baker, in part, to mitigate Clark's behavior. Smitherman hoped to attract industry to Selma, and knew that unflattering headlines would not be good for Selma's business prospects. Baker and Smitherman worked together to minimize incidents of racial violence. However, jurisdiction had prevented Baker from controlling Clark at the Dallas County Courthouse, which as a county building was under the authority of Sheriff Clark, and now, as the marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge and left the city of Selma; Baker had no legal power over the actions of Alabama state troopers or of Sheriff Clark's men.[51]

Several groups of spectators watched as the marchers began crossing the bridge. Clark and Colonel Lingo observed from a parked car; approximately 100 white spectators watched from the parking lot of "Chicken Treat, Home of the Mickey Burger," and across the street roughly 50 black spectators stood near an old school bus. Troopers confined the national news media to an area in front of the Lehman Pontiac dealership. The press corps was composed of veteran reporters experienced in covering racial stories. According to Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, authors of *The Race Beat*, "The press, and especially television, had never been more ready for a civil rights campaign than in early January 1965. Almost every important national news organization had reporters, photographers, or camera crews who were experienced in civil rights coverage."[52] Film coverage of Bloody Sunday would prove to be especially important. The footage, captured by NBC, CBS, and ABC cameramen, would reach a wide audience and influence public opinion.

After crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Williams and Lewis continued to lead the marchers. They covered approximately 100 yards of level ground before stopping 50 feet from law enforcement officers.[53] As the two groups converged, Major Cloud directed his men to put on their gas masks; he then used a bullhorn to announce himself and ordered the "unlawful march" to disperse. Williams asked to speak to Major Cloud, but Cloud denied his request and gave the marchers two minutes to disperse. Lewis and Williams instructed their followers to kneel and pray. After only one minute Cloud ordered, "Troopers, advance."[54] Then, according to *New York Times* reporter Roy Reed:

> The troopers rushed forward, their blue uniforms and white helmets blurring into a flying wedge as they moved.
>
> The wedge moved with such force that it seemed almost to pass over the waiting column instead of through it.

[49] National Park Service, *Selma to Montgomery Historic Trail Study*, 15.
[50] Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 305-06.
[51] Roberts and Klibanoff, *Race Beat*, 380.
[52] Ibid., 376-77.
[53] Branch, *At Canaan's Edge*, 50.
[54] Halberstam, *Children*, 512-13; Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 74-75.

> The first 10 to 20 Negroes were swept to the ground screaming, arms and legs flying, and packs and bags went skittering across the grassy divider strip and on to the pavement on both sides.
>
> Those still on their feet retreated.
>
> The troopers continued pushing, using both the force of their bodies and the prodding of their nightsticks.
>
> A cheer went up from the white spectators lining the south side of the highway.
>
> The mounted possemen spurred their horses and rode at a run into the retreating mass. The Negroes cried out as they crowded together for protection, and the whites on the sideline whooped and cheered.
>
> The Negroes paused in their retreat for perhaps a minute still screaming and huddling together.
>
> Suddenly there was a report, like a gunshot, and a gray cloud spewed over the troopers and the Negroes.
>
> "Tear gas!" someone yelled.
>
> The cloud began covering the highway. Newsmen, who were confined by four troopers to a corner 100 yards away, began to lose sight of the action.
>
> But before the cloud finally hid it all, there were several seconds of unobstructed view. Fifteen or twenty nightsticks could be seen through the gas, flailing at the heads of the marchers.
>
> The Negroes broke and ran. Scores of them streamed across the parking lot of the Selma Tractor Company. Troopers and posse men, mounted and unmounted, went after them.[55]

To John Lewis the advance was "like a human wave, a blur of blue shirts and billy clubs and bullwhips. We had no chance to turn and retreat. There were six hundred people behind us, bridge railings to either side and the river below." In a moment that was captured in still photographs and on film, a trooper struck John Lewis with a night stick. Lewis was eventually knocked unconscious and suffered a fractured skull. Nearby, Amelia Boynton was also knocked unconscious.

As the attack unfolded, SNCC worker Lafayette Surney was at a corner payphone reporting on the march's departure to SNCC headquarters in Atlanta. At 3:15 p.m., Surney told a SNCC staffer, who transcribed the conversation, that state troopers were using tear gas. As the marchers fled back into Selma, Surney continued to report his observations to SNCC headquarters. Troopers and possemen pursued marchers as they retreated back over the Edmund Pettus Bridge:

> Marchers in flight back to Selma collided with one another in the mists of choking tear gas. Many clung to the bridge railings on the sidewalk to escape the mounted possemen who swung clubs or homemade flails of rubber hose laced with spikes, then jumped through gaps back into the roadway to run more freely, dodging troopers and possemen on foot.[56]

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[55] Roy Reed, "Alabama Police Use Gas and Clubs To Rout Negroes," *New York Times*, 8 March 1965, 1.
[56] Branch, *At Canaan's Edge*, 52.

Possemen who had remained in Selma attacked marchers who were fleeing into the city of Selma. White spectators joined in the violence, attacking African Americans, reporters, and taking the camera of an FBI agent.[57] African Americans sought refuge in Brown Chapel, and in nearby homes. Troopers, possemen and uniformed sheriff's deputies alternatively chased African Americans indoors and called for them to come out. One black teenager was thrown through a window of the First Baptist Church and Sheriff Clark was seen firing a tear gas canister into a home. Surney, whose recorded description of the attack would later be offered to radio stations, was also injured in the attack.

Now that the attack had moved back into Selma city limits, Wilson Baker attempted to defuse the situation. Seeing possemen ride their horses up the steps of Brown Chapel, Baker, in view of the press, confronted Clark and demanded that he stop his show of force and move his "cowboys" out of the city. Clark defiantly replied that he had "already waited a month too damn long about moving *in!*" Baker was eventually able to remove Clark from the immediate vicinity of Brown Chapel, but, Clark refused to leave Sylvan Street. As Baker worked to control Clark, Andrew Young and James Bevel worked to calm marchers who were on the verge of fighting back. Eventually violence ceased, the *Selma Times-Journal* reported that "[t]hirty minutes after the marchers' encounter with the troopers, a Negro could not be seen walking the streets."[58]

Medical staff treated over 100 people for minor injuries at Brown Chapel. The more seriously injured were transported in ambulances and hearses to the two medical facilities that would admit African Americans. Fifty-eight people were taken to the Good Samaritan Hospital, a Catholic facility, and eight people were taken to the Burwell Infirmary, a nursing home. Cuts, broken bones, and head wounds were common injuries. Tear gas was especially problematic. It was absorbed into clothing and continued to irritate its victims long after they had escaped the initial clouds. Before being taken to the hospital for a fractured skull, Lewis addressed the marchers (and press) who had retreated to Brown Chapel. "I don't know how President Johnson can send troops to Vietnam. I don't see how he can send troops to the Congo. I don't see how he can send troops to Africa, and he can't send troops to Selma, Alabama." Lewis' statement appeared in the *New York Times* the next day.[59]

National Response to Bloody Sunday

Law enforcement officers' had attempted to minimize press coverage by confining the press to a corner, but, reporters, photographers, and film crews documented the attack. Roy Reed's coverage of the attack appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* along with a four-column photograph of the attack.[60] NBC, CBS, and ABC all aired footage of the attack. ABC interrupted *Judgment of Nuremberg* and showed 48 million Americans[61] fifteen minutes of footage from the Bloody Sunday attack. According to Roberts and Klibanoff, ABC's coverage had "the greatest impact on the nation.… Suddenly viewers were watching—not Nazi Germany but segregationist Alabama. The juxtaposition struck like psychological lighting in American homes."[62]

ABC film crews had raced to get footage of Bloody Sunday to their New York studios. The undeveloped footage had been driven "around troopers blockading Highway 80 at the first chance, then on through Lowndes County to the Montgomery airport and flights through Atlanta to New York." In New York, lab technicians

[57] Lewis, *Walking with the Wind,* 329.
[58] Branch, *At Canaan's Edge,* 53-54.
[59] Lewis, *Walking with the Wind,* 330.
[60] Garrow, *Protest at Selma,* 80.
[61] Branch, *At Canaan's Edge,* 56.
[62] Roberts and Klibanoff, *Race Beat,* 386.

were called in to develop the film and by 9:00 p.m. EST network executives had viewed the film. Shortly after 9:00 p.m. anchorman Frank Reynolds interrupted *Judgment of Nuremberg* and then proceeded to narrate 15 minutes of footage from Bloody Sunday.

The consequences of national television coverage of Bloody Sunday were immediate. Television, more so than radio or the print media, was well suited to convey the events of Bloody Sunday because television was particularly capable of depicting violence. As journalist Henry Fairlie has written:

> The impact of violence…is much greater in a moving picture than in a still picture or descriptive prose. Violence is movement—the raising of an arm, the smashing of it on someone's head—and movement is what television cannot help emphasizing.[63]

A national audience saw the startling and dramatic footage from Bloody Sunday on television, and what would have been a localized problem in the past was swiftly transformed into a national cause. Through television, Americans became involved and invested in the lives of Selma residents, and the Edmund Pettus Bridge was made into a symbol of the struggle for voting rights.

As Joseph Smitherman, mayor of Selma in 1965, explained, "When that beating happened at the foot of the bridge, it looked like war . . . That went all over the country. And the people, the wrath of the nation came down on us."[64] Coverage of Bloody Sunday shocked Americans and made voting rights a national issue. As journalist David Halberstam writes:

> It [Bloody Sunday] had been nothing less than state-sponsored mayhem that day, the state of Alabama using its full force to beat and intimidate its poorest citizens, and thereby keep them from being able to participate in the political process. Yet it was the most short-lived of segregationist victories, for yes, they had succeeded momentarily in stopping the march, and they had driven back the terrified demonstrators, many of them beaten and wounded. But Clark and Lingo had unwittingly succeeded in playing the parts scripted for them by Martin Luther King: they had called national attention to black grievances in rural Alabama.[65]

On March 8, 1965, the previous day's confrontation on the Edmund Pettus Bridge made headlines in every major newspaper.[66] "Everyone who bought a newspaper read about it. Everyone who owned a television set saw it," wrote historian Adam Fairclough, "Rarely has an event aroused public opinion so quickly and decisively." Outrage over Bloody Sunday was expressed by the public, religious leaders, the news media, and politicians.[67]

Also on March 8, 1965, six members of Congress made public statements condemning the actions of Alabama law enforcement officers and Governor George Wallace. Walter Mondale, a Democratic Senator from Minnesota, used the Bloody Sunday attacks to call for voting rights legislation:

> Sunday's outrage in Selma, Alabama, makes passage of legislation to guarantee Southern Negroes the right to vote an absolute imperative for Congress this year.[68]

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[63] Henry Fairlie quoted in Garrow, *Protest at Selma,* 166.
[64] Joseph Smitherman quoted in Williams, *Eyes on the Prize,* 273.
[65] Halberstam, *Children,* 513-14.
[66] Garrow, *Protest at Selma,* 78.
[67] Fairclough, *Better Day Coming,* 291.
[68] Walter Mondale quoted in Garrow, *Protest at Selma,* 82.

According to Garrow, who has made an extensive study of congressional comments during the Selma voting rights campaign:

> The best reflection of just how widespread that outrage was within the Congress came on the floors of both houses on Tuesday as forty-three representatives and seven senators rose to condemn Sunday's attack and call for voting rights legislation.[69]

In Washington, D.C., "every politician who could get a reporter to listen denounced it [the attack] and demanded some sort of Federal action."[70] Three SNCC workers staged a sit-in at the Justice Department, which eventually grew to almost 200, while a picket line formed outside the White House.[71] Protests took place in other cities as well: hundreds of protesters stationed themselves outside the Manhattan FBI office, a 50-person sit-in was staged at the intersection of State and Madison Streets in Chicago, and there were marches in Boston, Cleveland, Oakland, Syracuse, New Haven, and Toronto. The largest march in response to Bloody Sunday was in Detroit where Republican Governor George Romney led a crowd of 10,000 people five times around the Federal building.[72] These sympathy marches also received extensive press coverage.[73] Roberts and Klibanoff report that "*The New York Times* was able to fill column after column of summaries [of protests] from across the nation and Canada."[74]

Some who viewed the Bloody Sunday coverage decided to travel to Selma. In an article entitled, "Midnight Plane to Alabama: Journey of Conscience," journalist George B. Leonard recounts his journey from San Francisco, California, to Selma, Alabama, and shares the stories of other travelers who, like him, were traveling to Selma "to place themselves alongside the Negroes they had watched on television."[75] In Selma, on Monday, March 8, the "usually quiet terminal pulsated with people: priests, nuns, rabbis, Protestant clergymen, college students, all come to Alabama to support the marchers."[76]

Voting Rights Campaign Continues in Selma

People from across America joined the protesters in Selma following Bloody Sunday. Several hundred American clergymen answered Martin Luther King Jr.'s call to come to Selma and participate in a second march and, on March 9, 1965, approximately 2,000 people gathered at Brown Chapel ready to march.[77] The large turn-out put King in a difficult position.

SCLC attorneys had petitioned U.S. District Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr. for an injunction that would prevent state officials from interfering with a second march. Johnson, in response, had issued an order that prohibited any march from Selma to Montgomery until a hearing could be held. King was hesitant to disappoint the marchers, but also hesitant to disobey a Federal court order. Throughout March 8, and into the early morning of March 9, King met with SCLC attorneys and staffers, various movement leaders, and officials from the Justice

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[69] Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 88.
[70] Fager, *Selma 1965*, 99.
[71] Ibid., 99, 106.
[72] Ibid., 106.
[73] Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 91.
[74] Roberts and Klibanoff, *Race Beat*, 387.
[75] George B. Leonard, "Midnight Plane to Alabama: Journey of Conscience" in Clayborne Carson et al., *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 214.
[76] In fact, car rental agencies ran out of cars, and so to accommodate the newly arrived movement members organized car pools. Roberts and Klibanoff, *Race Beat*, 387.
[77] Hampton et al., *Voices of Freedom*, 230.

Department, including LeRoy Collins, head of the Community Relations Service Office, whom President Johnson had sent to Selma to mediate the situation. Various scenarios, including the possibility of a symbolic march to the site of Bloody Sunday, were discussed.

On March 9, 1965, as the marchers gathered at Brown Chapel, only King and a few of his staff knew what had been decided; the mass of marchers believed they were headed to Montgomery.[78] A little after 2:00 p.m., King led the roughly 2,000 marchers out of the church. Collins, who had been meeting with Alabama officials intercepted King and gave him a sketch map. If King followed the route on the map, Collins told King, the marchers would not be attacked. King, following the approved route, proceeded south on Sylvan Street, turned west on Water Street, and then south on Broad Street towards the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

At the base of the bridge, on Broad Street, Deputy U.S. Marshal Stanley Fountain read Judge Johnson's order. King replied that he was aware of the order and continued to lead the marchers across the bridge. At the site of Bloody Sunday, an estimated 500 law enforcement officials and 150 foreign and domestic reporters met the marchers. This time the marchers, led by King, kneeled, prayed, and sang "We Shall Overcome." The troopers then parted, but instead of moving forward, King turned around and led the group back to Brown Chapel. There, King admitted to reporters that he had not intended to march to Montgomery. The day would later be called Turnaround Tuesday.

On the night of March 9, 1965, Reverend James Reeb, who had traveled from Boston for the Tuesday march, was attacked along with two other ministers. Reeb died of his injuries two days later. His death, like the death of Jimmie Lee Jackson, was a catalyst. It attracted considerable attention prompting President Johnson to call Reeb's wife and father to express his condolences, and prompting nearly 20 congressmen to call for voting rights legislation.[79]

A third march to Montgomery was scheduled for March 21. This third march received Federal support that the protesters had sought. After hearing testimony from John Lewis and reviewing news footage of Bloody Sunday, Judge Johnson granted the protesters permission to march. Furthermore, President Johnson Federalized 4,000 Alabama National Guardsmen to protect the marchers. Johnson, in a special message to Congress on March 15, 1965, had made his position on voting rights clear. In announcing plans to send voting rights legislation to Congress he stated, "It is wrong—deadly wrong—to deny any of your fellow Americans the right to vote in this country." In his speech, Johnson clearly aligned himself with the civil rights movement, even going so far as to use the language of the movement, pronouncing, "we shall overcome."[80] Following President Johnson's speech, "a surge of support for the civil rights movement was cresting all across America." On March 17, 1965, House Judiciary Committee chairman Emanuel Celler began subcommittee proceedings by stating that, "'The murder, savage brutality, and violence' perpetrated by Alabama lawmen 'have so aroused the nation as to make action by the Congress necessary and speedy."[81]

On March 21, 1965, with the support of the Federal courts and President Johnson, 3,200 marchers left Brown Chapel headed to Montgomery. Along the way, various state and Federal law enforcement officers, along with

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[78] Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 333-34.

[79] Foley et al., *Racial Voting Rights*, 67.

[80] "President Lyndon B. Johnson's Special Message to the Congress: The American Promise March 15, 1965," Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, last modified June 6, 2007, accessed June 24, 2009, http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650315.asp.

[81] Nick Kotz, *Judgment Days*: *Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Laws that Changed America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 314, 317.

the Federalized Alabama National Guard, offered protection.[82] In an article for *The New Yorker*, Renata Adler reported on the march as it neared the Edmund Pettus Bridge, "On Broad Street, which is also U.S. Route 80 to Montgomery, they [the marchers] turned left, and as segregationist loud speakers along the way blared 'Bye, Bye, Blackbird' and the white onlookers began to jeer, the marchers approached and crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge. And the march entered another mood—jubilation." Adler also observed that the quality of this march was different than the previous marches:

> few of the thirty-two hundred marchers who set out on Sunday morning seemed to have a consciousness of risk. They did not have a sharply defined sense of purpose, either. President Johnson's speech about voting rights and Judge Johnson's granting of permission for the march to take place had made the march itself ceremonial—almost redundant. The immediate aims of the abortive earlier marches had been realized: the national conscience had been aroused and Federal intervention had been secured.[83]

Unlike the previous two marches, this march was protected by law enforcement officers and the aim of the marchers, had in a sense, already been achieved. After five days, on March 25, 1965, the marchers arrived in Montgomery and a crowd estimated at 25,000 assembled at the steps of the Alabama State Capitol (First Confederate Capital, NHL, 1960). Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to those assembled of the movement's ultimate aim, ". . . a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience." In a rhetorical and rhythmic refrain King asked the crowd "How long?" it would take. "Not long," he answered, because "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."[84] On August 6, 1965, Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act.

Voting Rights Act of 1965

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 proved more successful than previous civil rights legislation (1957, 1960, and 1964) because it allowed the executive branch of the Federal government to take direct action to enforce voting rights. The Act stated that "No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color" (Section 2). Voting registration practices of local and state governments with histories of voter discrimination (identified by a formula in Section 4) were placed under strict Federal supervision. Federal registrars could be deployed to counties that refused or delayed registration of minority voters.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 significantly impacted minority voter registration in the South. A 1968 study produced by the United States Commission on Civil Rights found that since the passage of the Act, there was "a dramatic increase in Negro registration and voting reflected in the election of a sizable number of Negroes to office—many at the county level and some at the State level—and the willingness of hundreds of Negro candidates to assume the risk of running for office." The commission pointed to Dallas County as an example of progress achieved since passage of the Act. At the onset of the SCLC campaign there were about 500 registered black voters in Selma, Alabama; by February of 1968, there were about 5,300.[85]

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[82] Kotz, *Judgment Days*, 320-21.

[83] Renata Adler, "Letter from Selma," in *Reporting Civil Rights, Part Two: American Journalism, 1963-1973* (New York: Library of America, 2003), 367, 370.

[84] "Our God Is Marching On! March 25, 1965. Montgomery, Ala.," MLK Online, accessed August 2009, http://www.mlkonline.net/ourgod.html.

[85] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Political Participation*, 177, 17.

The extraordinary historic importance of the Selma Voting Rights Campaign and Bloody Sunday was immediately recognized. In a nationally televised address to a joint session of Congress on March 15, 1965, President Lyndon Baines Johnson described Bloody Sunday and the Selma voting rights campaign in historic terms:

> At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama.[86]

Since the time of Johnson's remarks the Selma voting rights campaign and Bloody Sunday have continued to be recognized as exceptionally significant events. In 1996, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation designated the Selma to Montgomery March route, which includes the Edmund Pettus Bridge, an All American Road—the highest designation a road can receive under the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program. In 1998, Congress established the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail and instructed the National Park Service to "cooperate with other Federal, State, and local authorities to preserve historic sites along the route, including (but not limited to) the Edmund Pettus Bridge and the Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church."[87]

Conclusion

Bloody Sunday stunned the American public and spurred politicians to pass strong voting rights legislation. Bloody Sunday played a significant role in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by dramatizing the need for voting rights legislation. Its passage ensured the ability of African Americans to vote and enabled them to effect change through the ballot.

Martin Luther King Jr. described Selma as a "shining moment in the conscience of man. If the worst in American life lurked in its dark streets, the best of American instincts arose passionately from across the nation to overcome it."[88] The Edmund Pettus Bridge is synonymous with Bloody Sunday and the Selma voting rights campaign—the bridge represents both the enormous resistance faced by, and the major advancements made by, members of the civil rights movement. The bridge is symbolic of the "shining moment" described by King. As Americans witnessed law enforcement officers' brutal treatment of marchers on the bridge, the conscience of America was aroused. Public outcry over the atrocities in Selma assured speedy passage of meaningful voting rights legislation. As journalist Nick Kotz observed in his history of the civil rights movement, "Never before had the civil rights movement received the breadth of support and the strength of Federal endorsement that it had during the eight days beginning with Bloody Sunday and culminating in Johnson's speech."[89] Today, the Edmund Pettus Bridge is a reminder of the violence and public outcry surrounding Bloody Sunday and the violence of the Selma voting rights campaign. As John Lewis stated, "Even more than 30 years later, standing at the apex of the Edmund Pettus Bridge is a powerful experience. The trail [Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail] reminds us of where we were in 1965 and how far we have come as a nation and as a people."[90]

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[86] "President Lyndon B. Johnson's Special Message to the Congress: The American Promise March 15, 1965," Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, last modified June 6, 2007, accessed June 24, 2009, http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650315.asp.

[87] An Act to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the route from Selma to Montgomery as a National Historic Trail, HR 1129, 104th Cong., 2nd sess. Congressional Record Online via GPO Access, accessed June 24 2009, http://wais.access.gpo.gov.

[88] "Our God Is Marching On! March 25, 1965. Montgomery, Ala.," MLK Online, accessed August 2009, http://www.mlkonline.net/ourgod.html.

[89] Kotz, *Judgment Days*, 314.

[90] John Lewis, *Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail Statement by Congressman John Lewis*, May 16, 1996, Central Files Cultural Resource Division, Southeast Regional Office, National Park Service.

Comparison of Properties

Two properties have been Federally recognized as nationally significant for their association with the Selma voting rights campaign: The Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail (established in 1996), a fifty-four mile trail that follows the path of the marchers from Brown Chapel to the Alabama State Capitol; and Brown Chapel (NHL, 1997) for its significance as an organizing and meeting place during the Selma voting rights campaign. The Edmund Pettus Bridge is associated with a violent and highly publicized confrontation between protestors and law enforcement officers that captured the attention of the American public and raised the profile of the voting rights campaign in Selma, Alabama. As a result of the events of Bloody Sunday the Federal Government intervened and made possible the 54-mile march to Montgomery. The importance of Bloody Sunday as a catalyst for national action merits NHL individual designation for the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

The 2009 "Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights" National Historic Landmarks theme study recommends that two properties related to the Selma voting rights campaign be studied for NHL consideration: the Edmund Pettus Bridge and the Alabama State Capitol. The Alabama State Capitol**,** Montgomery, Alabama, which was eventually reached by protesters on March 25, 1965, was the intended destination of all three marches. At the conclusion of the final march on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "How Long? Not Long" speech to a crowd of approximately 25,000. In 1960, the capitol was designated an NHL for its significance as the first Confederate Capitol; the NHL theme study recommends that the Alabama State Capitol now be evaluated for NHL consideration for its association with the Selma to Montgomery march.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
__ Previously Listed in the National Register.
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

__ State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
__ University
__ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 7.15 acres

UTM References:		**Zone**	**Easting**	**Northing**
	A	16	498416	3585043

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary begins at the middle of the intersection of Water Street and Broad Street (US 80) in Selma and follows Broad Street (US 80), including its flanking sidewalks, east over the Edmund Pettus Bridge. On the east side of the bridge the boundary expands to include the flanking frontage roads that emerge from US 80 and the road right-of-way (100 feet from the center line). The boundary ends at the middle of the intersection of Kings Bend Rd.

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes the portions ofU.S.80 most closely associated with Bloody Sunday, including the Edmund Pettus Bridge and the area ofU.S.80 directly east of the bridge where law enforcement officers met the marchers. The section east of the bridge is where the Bloody Sunday confrontation started and was most concentrated. This is the area ofU.S.80 that appeared in newspaper photographs and film footage of Bloody Sunday. Although law enforcement officers chased the marchers back into the city of Selma and action occurred in various locations throughout the city, only the area ofU.S.80 where action was concentrated and captured on film, is included in this nomination.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM
August 28, 2012

Edmund Pettus Bridge, camera looking northeast. Photograph by Cynthia Walton, Southeast Regional Office (SERO), National Park Service (NPS), June 26, 2012.

Edmund Pettus Bridge, camera looking south. Photograph by Cynthia Walton, SERO, National Park Service (NPS), June 26, 2012.

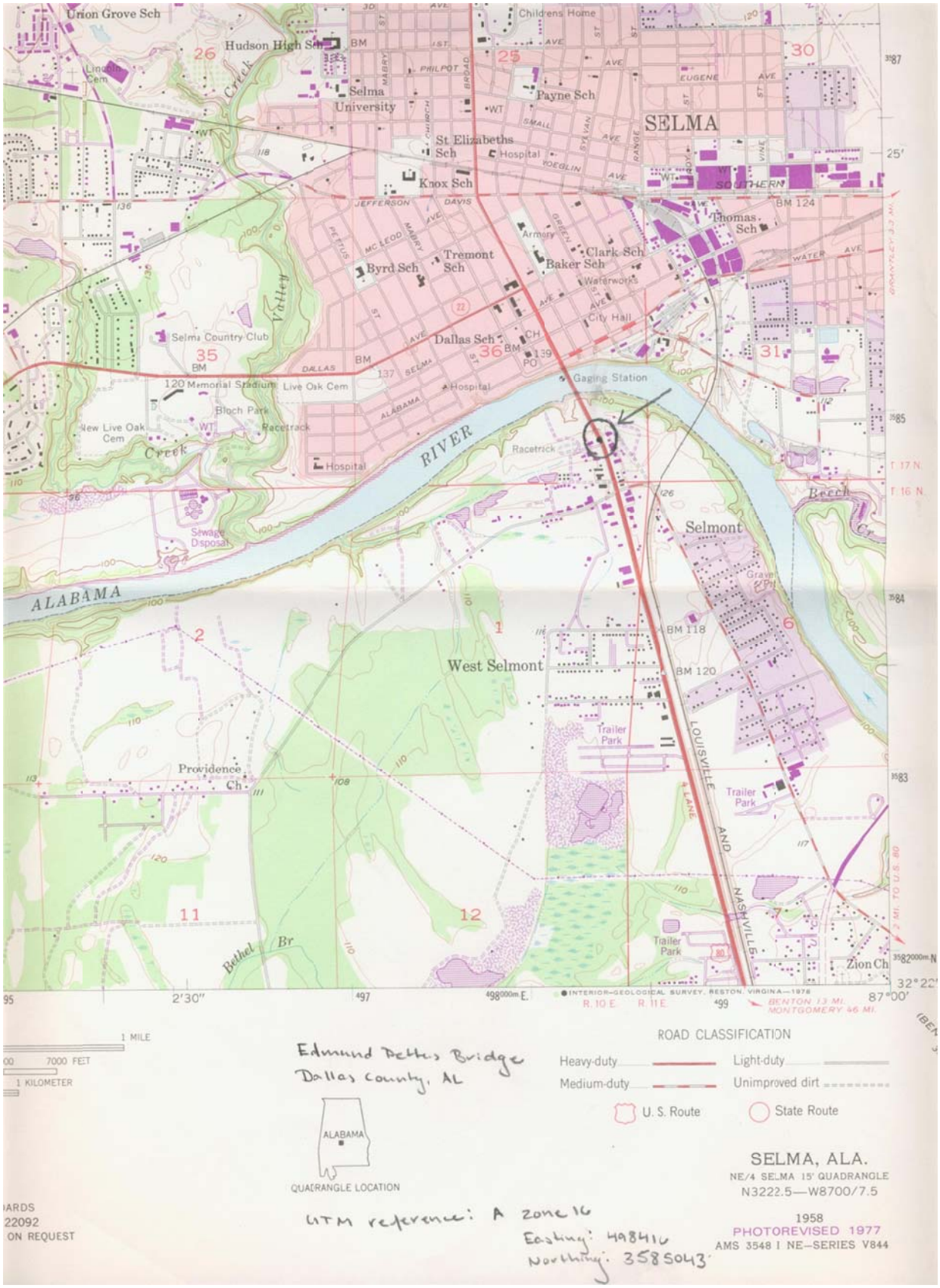
Edmund Pettus Bridge, camera looking south. Photograph by Cynthia Walton, SERO, NPS, June 26, 2012.

US 80 with Edmund Pettus Bridge in the distance, camera looking north. Photograph by Cynthia Walton, SERO, NPS, June 26, 2012.

US 80, camera looking south. Photograph by Cynthia Walton, SERO, NPS, June 26, 2012.

Intersection of Water and Broad Streets (US 80) with the city of Selma, Alabama, in background, camera looking north. Photograph by Cynthia Walton, SERO, NPS, June 26, 2012.

Proposed NHL Boundary Map


Union Grove Sch
Hudson High Sch
Childrens Home
Selma University
Payne Sch
SELMA
St Elizabeths Sch
Hospital
Knox Sch
Thomas Sch
Armory
Clark Sch
Baker Sch
Tremont Sch
Byrd Sch
Waterworks
City Hall
Selma Country Club
Dallas Sch
Memorial Stadium
Live Oak Cem
Bloch Park
Racetrack
New Live Oak Cem
Gaging Station
RIVER
ALABAMA
Selmont
West Selmont
Sewage Disposal
Trailer Park
Providence Ch
Bethel Br
Zion Ch
LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE
INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1978
BENTON 13 MI.
MONTGOMERY 46 MI.
1 MILE
7000 FEET
1 KILOMETER
Edmund Pettus Bridge
Dallas County, AL
ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty
Light-duty
Medium-duty
Unimproved dirt
U. S. Route
State Route
ALABAMA
QUADRANGLE LOCATION
SELMA, ALA.
NE/4 SELMA 15' QUADRANGLE
N3222.5—W8700/7.5
1958
PHOTOREVISED 1977
AMS 3548 I NE—SERIES V844
UTM reference: A zone 16
Easting: 498416
Northing: 3585043