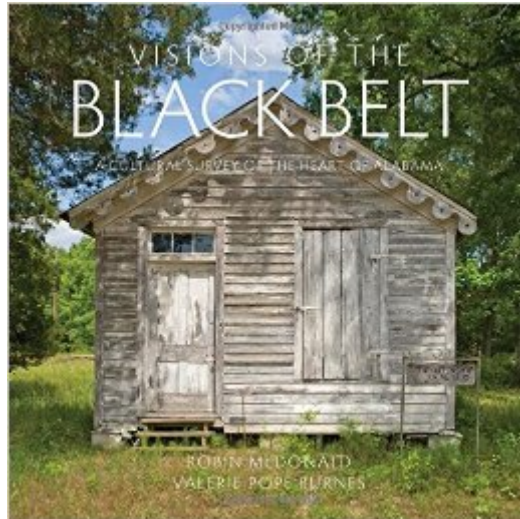


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# Visions Of The Black Belt: A Cultural Survey Of The Heart Of Alabama



## Synopsis

In *Visions of the Black Belt*, Robin McDonald and Valerie Pope Burnes offer a richly illustrated tour of the Black Belt, the fertile arc that represents the cultural efflorescence of Alabama's heartland. Like knowledgeable friends, McDonald and Burnes guide readers through the Black Belt's towns and architecture and introduce the region's great panoply of citizens, farmers, craftspeople, cooks, writers, and musicians. A constellation of Black Belt towns arose during Alabama's territorial decades, communities like Selma, Camden, Eutaw, Tuskegee, Greenville, and many more. *Visions of the Black Belt* recounts their stories and others, such as Demopolis's founding by exiles from Napoleon's France. As an escarpment of clouds scuds across an indigo sky, the ruins of Alabama's lost capital of Cahaba reveal the secrets of its lost squares. Also on this picturesque tour are the Black Belt's homes, from artless cabins wreathed in fern to ozymandian manses wrapped by stately columns, such as Kirkwood and Reverie. Among the emblematic houses of worship lovingly photographed in *Visions of the Black Belt* is Prairieville's St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, noted for its "œcarpenter gothic" style. Also reflecting the region's history of faith are poignant graveyards such as Greenville's Pioneer Cemetery with its homespun memorials of seashell-and-concrete and the elegant marbles clad in ebon lichen of Selma's Live Oak Cemetery. In photos and text, McDonald and Burnes bring to life the layers of history that shaped the Black Belt's tastes, sounds, and colors. Their gastronomic discoveries include the picant crawfish of the Faunsdale Bar & Grill and GainesRidge Dining Club's famed Black Bottom pie. They bring the sounds of the Black Belt to life by presenting a wide range of musicians and musical events, from bona fide blues and soul masters to Eutaw's Black Belt Roots Festival. Including two maps and more than 370 full-color photographs, *Visions of the Black Belt* offers a timeless message of faith, determination, and the rich simplicity of living in harmony with the rhythms of the land and nature. Published in Cooperation with the Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center, Camden, Alabama

## Book Information

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Age Range: 6 and up

Grade Level: 1 and up

## Customer Reviews

I just received this book and as a photographer of similar places and people in South Georgia, I'm a big fan of Robin's other book from the UAP, Heart of Small Town, so I had high expectations; that said, this book far exceeded those expectations! It should become a model for similar works. It's beautifully laid out and covers not only Alabama's beautiful historic architecture but the state's most creative and innovative people, as well. The Black Belt is a representative region of Alabama that was home to the first state capital and the present state capital. That says something about its cultural and historical importance. Robin's photographs will make you want to get in your car and find these places. You won't go wrong in buying this book. --Brian Brown, Vanishing South Georgia

It's home. And it's wonderful. This is an unbiased look at a part of Alabama that many people don't know about. Filled with people I know, places I have been, VISIONS OF THE BLACK BELT takes me on a journey of love.

I was gifted with this beautiful book and it is a treasure! I live in the Black Belt of Alabama and am now anxious to visit some of the places highlighted in this book. The pages are thick and of excellent quality. The photography is spectacular. I highly recommend this wonderful book. Thank you Dr. Valerie Pope Burnes and Robin McDonald and to the loving friend who gifted me with this book.

A comprehensive visual and written introduction to a little known and somewhat isolated region. Visions of the Black Belt reveals the distinctive cultural aspects of a land that would seem almost to be a foreign country to many Americans if they knew about it. There is a sense of the mysterious that permeates this area which may have to do with the age of the civilization that has, and

continues to, exist in this unique space.

Evocative and gorgeously photographed, "Visions of the Black Belt" is simply stunning; a book you will return to again and again. The authors have compiled a social and cultural history of this long-tormented part of the country that captures all its contradictions and undeniable beauty. Highly recommended.

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