



# **The Marengo Jake Stories: The Tales of Jake Mitchell and Robert Wilton Burton (Library of Alabama Classics)**

*Jake Mitchell*

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Between 1885 and 1894 *The Montgomery Advertiser*, *The Birmingham-Age Herald*, and *The New Orleans Times Democrat* featured a series of about 80 humorous black-dialect sketches by Robert Wilton Burton, a bookseller and writer from Auburn, Alabama. According to Burton, these tales were based on various characters in the black community of Auburn, and 36 of them were devoted exclusively to a character called "Marengo Jake." Probably originally from Virginia, Jake Mitchell was brought to the Drake Plantation in Marengo county as a boy in the 1850's. After the Civil War, the Drake family moved to Auburn and many former slaves followed, forming a fairly large expatriate Marengo County community. The theme of the stories, usually related by Jake, centers on the superiority of all things from Marengo County, especially over those in Lee County, in which Auburn is located.

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