Daniel Pratt was born in Temple, New Hampshire, on July 20, 1799. Because of his father's poor health, his formal education was ended at the age of 16 when he was apprenticed to a carpenter for four years to learn a trade.

Pratt spent the majority of the next 10 years in Milledgeville, Georgia, where he worked as a carpenter. It was during this time that Pratt built some of the most elegant houses in the state, all of which are noted for their detail in design.

In 1831, Pratt moved to Clinton, Georgia, where he entered into partnership with Samuel Griswold to manufacture cotton gins. Two years later, Pratt moved his wife, two slaves, and the materials for 50 cotton gins to Autauga County, Alabama. Immediately after arriving, Pratt established a blacksmith shop and a gin factory. A year later, he moved to another location where he acquired the land that would later become Prattville. There he established a saw mill and grist mill and began to manufacture cotton gins. He improved Eli Whitney’s model of the cotton gin and was eventually described as the builder of the finest cotton gins in the world. In 1846, he built a cotton factory, followed by a wool factory and a sash-and-blind factory.

In addition to his business interests, Pratt accomplished many things to improve the lives of citizens of Prattville. He built a Methodist church for the town of Prattville, and a school, for which he designed the desks, incorporating the revolutionary concept of an individual desk for each student.

Despite his commercial triumphs, Pratt still had an inclination toward the arts and established an art gallery adjacent to his home. He commissioned an artist he met on a business trip to New Orleans, George Cook, to spend several years in Rome copying some of the most monumental paintings there to grace the walls of his new gallery. Such works as The Interior of St. Peter’s, The Landing of Cleopatra, The Landing of Columbus, The Roman Forum and The Last Supper were just some of the art copies that hung in the gallery.

Among his other notable achievements, Pratt served in the state legislature; was involved in banking and building railroads; financed several plank roads, the forerunner of our modern highway systems; designed covered bridges, based on those he knew in New Hampshire in his youth, which were the prototype of many such bridges built in Georgia and Alabama; served as the director of the North and South Railway; and as an investor in Birmingham’s Red Mountain Iron and Coal Company. He was elected to the Alabama Hall of Fame in 1953, and received an honorary master in the mechanic and useful arts degree from The University of Alabama.

Daniel Pratt aided immensely the development of Alabama’s economy. He became the greatest capitalist and industrialist of his time in Alabama, making Prattville the industrial center of the state. He died May 13, 1873, at the age of 73.