

**THE PEOPLE  
WHO LIVED ON THE LAND  
THAT IS NOW  
REDSTONE ARSENAL**

**POND BEAT, MULLINS FLAT, HICKORY GROVE,  
THE UNION HILL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH AREA, AND THE ELKO AREA**

**WRITTEN BY:**

**BEVERLY S. CURRY  
REDSTONE ARSENAL STAFF ARCHAEOLOGIST 1996-2005**

**December 2006  
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**BEVERLY S. CURRY AND THE  
REVEREND MCKINLEY JONES, 2005**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beverly S. Curry retired from the University of Alabama (UA) in Tuscaloosa in 2005. She was employed by the UA Office of Archaeological Research as a Staff Archaeologist; however, for the last nine years of her employment, she was contracted from the University to the Army, serving as the Staff Archaeologist at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

The author earned a Bachelor's Degree (1981) and a Master's Degree (1987) in Anthropology from UA. She also has a Master's Degree in Education (Teaching English as a Second Language) from UA. In addition to her work at the UA, she taught an English class to professors at the University of Lima in Peru in 1994 and also taught a course in Maritime Archaeology at that university.

The author has extensive interviewing experience, which began with interviewing delinquent boys (incarcerated by the Illinois Youth Commission) for a research project on informal social control. In addition, she interviewed inmates in all levels of federal prisons across the U.S., including the federal maximum-security prison in Atlanta. She was the first female allowed to interview inmates in that prison. She interviewed residents on three islands in the Bahamas, resulting in the development of a model and a quantitative and qualitative study of Bahamian foodways. She also interviewed residents in the Bahamas for a project to discern what effects the drug trade that passed through had on the island of Bimini and its inhabitants.

The author's interviewing experience in Alabama includes conducting the interviews with female faculty and staff at the University for a psychology professor who had a grant to study stress in working women and also conducting interviews with Black parents in rural areas of Alabama for the College of Community Health Science. In addition, she interviewed a random sample of Tuscaloosa residents after a hostage-taking incident at a local school in order to learn their perceptions of the amount of force used in the takedown of the perpetrator that was shown in the media.

The interviewing conducted with the former residents of the land that is now Redstone Arsenal provided the author the opportunity to meet many good people. This book was written to preserve their history; the author's personal gain was in learning how the people lived and what they thought, giving her an understanding of "how it was."

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## PREFACE

The time was World War II. The Army owned only one chemical manufacturing plant, Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland. In 1941, Congress approved funds for the Army to construct another chemical manufacturing and storage facility.

On July 3, 1941, fire trucks were used by the *The Huntsville Times* to disperse an EXTRA edition of the paper. The banner headline was cause for great excitement in Huntsville, and for great anxiety for the People of Pond Beat, Mullins Flat, Hickory Grove, Horton's Ford, and other farmstead communities south of Huntsville. The newspaper said a 40 million dollar chemical plant would be built in the area south of the city, extending to the Tennessee River.

This military reservation would be called Huntsville Arsenal, and it would be used for construction of a depot area. In addition, the Army Ordnance Corps was expanding in response to President Roosevelt's proclamation of May 27, 1941, which declared the existence of a state of military emergency.

“Recognizing the tremendous economy of locating the new facility close to Huntsville Arsenal, the Chief of Ordnance acquired a 4,000 acre tract east of and adjacent to the Chemical Warfare Service's installation. In 1941, the Army acquired 32,244 acres to establish Huntsville Arsenal and 4000 acres for the Redstone Ordnance plant. Initially known as the Redstone Ordnance Plant, the new post was redesignated Redstone Arsenal on February 26, 1943 (Hughes 1991:52).”

“Of the 550 families (about 6000 men, women, and children) living in this part of the county, 76 percent were black. Some of the families were tenant farmers, but many, black and white, were landowners who had worked the fertile soil of the region for several decades (Hughes 1991:53).” They were forced to leave their land and their homes when the Army came, and they had very short notice. Some families had to move as early as July and August of 1941.

This book is a collection of interviews and related research about the people who lived on the land that is now the arsenal. It tells of their lives in the setting of the communities in which they lived.

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## INTRODUCTION

The author was the Staff Archaeologist at Redstone Arsenal (RSA) from September 1, 1996 to September 1, 2005. She was under contract to the Army from the University of Alabama. In order to be in compliance with State and Federal laws, any time the Army disturbed the ground for what the Army called “an undertaking,” the area for which the disturbance was proposed first had to be cleared from an archaeological perspective. This meant an archaeological survey had to be conducted to discern if any artifacts were present. Basically, “artifacts” meant anything that intentionally had been made or modified by people. Artifacts could be from either prehistoric or historic sites, and could include features. Features are non-movable objects. While features in prehistoric sites on the arsenal are generally found below the ground surface, those of historic times, such as the remains of a house foundation, sometimes are readily visible. The State of Alabama classifies any site containing historic artifacts that are over 50 years old as an historic archaeological site. Based on this, evidence of the remains of every former tenant farmer or sharecropper house that was once on the land that is now the arsenal would be documented as an historic archaeological site. This was a key factor in the instigation of this ethnographic study.

### **The First Interview (1996): Learning about History “First-Hand”**

In November of 1996, Dan Aughinbaugh, the range safety officer on Test Area 3, told the author about an elderly minister who visited the church and land where he had lived. All that remained of the Union Hill C.P. Cumberland Presbyterian Church was part of the foundation and cement steps, grown up in weeds and briars, but the Reverend McKinley Jones continued to visit the site regularly. Aughinbaugh pointed out that this was an opportunity for the Staff Archaeologist to learn about history “first hand.”

The author invited Reverend Jones to her office for what would be the first of many visits. The second time they met, in February of 1997, he brought with him a childhood friend, Mr. Albert Robinson (now deceased). For that meeting, the author invited the RSA Cultural Resource Manager (CRM) to join them. Having witnessed the conversations about places and happenings that took place in the 1930’s and earlier, the CRM agreed that much could be learned about historic archaeological sites on the arsenal by talking with the elders who lived there so many years before.

While the concept of talking with the elders was considered a viable way of learning more about the history of the land on the arsenal, times were busy for the Staff Archaeologist. There had been a paucity of formal record-keeping on the part of prior staff archaeologists, and the focus of the Staff Archaeologist was in mapping all former archaeological surveys that had been conducted on the arsenal, photocopying and compiling a file of all the State site forms for archaeological sites that had been documented on the arsenal, and working with the CRM to plan an arsenal-wide Phase I Archaeological Survey. Simply said, the Phase I survey consists of excavating holes (shovel testing) to sterile soil at specified intervals and screening the soil that is removed

to reveal any artifacts that might be present. The Staff Archaeologist herself conducted Phase I surveys of areas where immediate undertakings were proposed. The concept of talking with elderly people who had once lived on the land that is now the arsenal went, as the saying goes, “on the back burner.”

### **Archaeological Surveys**

By late 1999, Phase I archaeological surveys had been conducted on many acres of the arsenal. Many of the historic sites documented were thought to represent tenant farmer or sharecropper houses. The Phase I surveys only document the presence of a site, and, at the request of the Army, provide a recommendation as to the site’s National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility. A site is either recommended as eligible or not eligible for the NRHP. The survey report is sent to the Alabama State Historic Preservation Office (AL SHPO) in Montgomery. The AL SHPO may concur with the findings and recommendations as presented or may ask for further clarification or work before concurrence is reached on the determination of eligibility.

If it is determined that a site does not have the potential to offer new information for the archaeological record, then the site is designated as not eligible for the NRHP, and no further archaeological testing is required. The Army can proceed with undertakings. If a site is determined to be potentially eligible for the NRHP, before the Army can move forward with an undertaking that would disturb it, further archaeological testing must be conducted. The second phase of testing usually encompasses excavating 1 meter by 1 meter units and test trenches. The amount and type of testing is proposed in a research design that is submitted to the AL SHPO. If the second phase of testing indicates further research is warranted, a third phase of testing is required. Generally, the Army will endeavor to avoid sites that have been designated as potentially eligible for the NRHP, but in some cases avoidance is not feasible. Additional testing is both costly and time consuming.

### **Why Not Ask Grandma?**

As a result of the archaeological surveys and testing that had been conducted by 1999, many potentially eligible sites had been recorded. It was the opinion of the author that one class of sites, tenant farmer and sharecropper houses, could be understood best by doing another type of investigation. The purpose of the archaeological investigation is to learn about the structures and the life ways of those who lived in them. The author’s position was (and is): “If you want to know about where and how my Grandma lived, why don’t you ask me or my grandmother?”

## **Is an Ethnographic Study Feasible?**

Thus, in November of 1999, the author/researcher identified several elderly people who had lived in communities that were on the land taken by the Government. Sam Harris, Jr. had come to the arsenal to visit his former home, which still stands. She found his name in the phone book. When Dr. Elnora Clay Lanier called to inquire about permission to put a monument on her mother's grave, the CRM asked the researcher if she wanted to be the person to return the call since she was interested in meeting people who used to live on the arsenal. The researcher called Dr. Lanier, and they met for lunch. When Dr. Lanier mentioned elderly ladies who would enjoy visiting the cemetery, the researcher made arrangements to meet them and escort them to the cemetery. She later visited and interviewed the ladies she'd met, and gained additional names and phone numbers.

The first interviews she conducted were very rich in history. Mrs. Lizzie Ward was 99 years old (born in 1900) and remembered her grandmother, who was born a slave, still living in a house on what had been the Timmons plantation. Mrs. Pearl Horton Higginbotham, who kept notes about family history, discussed the community of Pond Beat that she remembered so well. Her grandfather, Yancy Horton, had been one of the pillars of the community.

The focus during the first interviews was on learning where the people had lived. The goal was to be able to tie the information about their home site to an archaeological site. Unfortunately, during some of the interviews, a large part of the time was taken with trying to ascertain where on the arsenal the subject had lived. The researcher had a Madison County highway map from the 1930's, which had some roads and houses shown. The women did not relate to maps, and so much construction and change had taken place on the land since the time they lived there, 60 years in the past, that the landmarks that would have identified neighborhoods and homes were gone. While specific locations of homes were not ascertained during these initial interviews, other aspects of daily and community life were revealed.

Eight of the interviews that are presented herein were conducted between November of 1999 and February 9, 2001. The interviewer was accompanied on five of those by a young archaeologist whom she had been asked to "show the ropes" about interviewing methods. On one interview she was accompanied by a young man who had been identified as having potential for learning to do interviewing; he did not return.

## **The Army Wrote a Scope of Work**

Based on these initial interviews, an ethnographic research project was deemed feasible by the Cultural Resources team at RSA. It was the contention that a specific class of sites could be identified that could be best explained by ethnographic research, specifically tenant farmer and sharecropper houses. The Cultural Resources team could foresee an in-depth project that could provide information about the historic house sites that are so numerous on RSA. This project would have a number of facets. Alexander

Archaeological Consultants (AAC) was contracted by the Army. A research design was constructed. A model was developed that encompassed a number of components: ethnography, archaeology, archival history, and cultural resource management. Through this work, classifications of historic sites would be developed.

While AAC steadily worked to develop components of the model, the ethnographic interviewing that would be conducted by the Staff Archaeologist came to a standstill because of other priorities in cultural resource management at the arsenal, which included new construction and undertakings relating to security measures that were mandated after the terrorist bombings. The interviewing again went to the “back burner.”

### **January 2005: The Staff Archaeologist Resumed Interviewing**

In January of 2005, the Staff Archaeologist was tasked with conducting interviewing as a priority. This meant she would spend at least 50 percent of her time working on the project. Her first task was to find the notebooks and materials she had packed away a few years before when the Directorate of Environmental Management had been moved from Building 112 to Building 4488.

**The Focus of the Study.** When the initial interviews were conducted, the focus had been on identifying where the subject lived and identifying structures that could be associated with historic archaeological sites. The focus of the study was broadened to learning about the residents, their families, and their lives, in the context of the broader community.

**Open-Ended Interview Questions.** No formal questionnaire was used. Broad questions were asked to permit the subjects to give a full range of responses. Basically, a series of open-ended questions was asked, using probes to focus the attention of the subject when necessary or to elicit details. The free flow of the conversation elicited voluntary comments about people, places, and customs about which one would not know to ask, so questions were added as the interviews progressed, and this is reflected in the interviews that are presented.

The following questions were asked, some of which were added as the interviewing progressed. The question regarding social interaction between Blacks and Whites was added after voluntary comments had been made on that topic. Of course, specific additional questions were asked all subjects, based on some of their responses to the open-ended questions.

- Who were your parents? Grandparents? What else can you tell me about your family history?
- Was there a particular cemetery where family members were buried?
- Where did you live? Who owned the property?
- Can you describe your house? Where was the (various out buildings)?
- Did your family have Delco lights? (Note: A question about using and making candles was quickly discarded when a woman indignantly asked just how old the researcher thought she was. By the same token, the question about having electricity was discarded because no one had it then. The question about Delco lights was added.)

- Did you throw unwanted/discarded items in the outhouse?
- Who were your neighbors? What can you tell me about them?
- What did you eat? What did you grow/raise? Did you can food?
- What did you buy at the store? Where was the store? Who owned the store?
- What crops did you raise?
- Where did you take your cotton/corn/cane? (Where was the mill/gin?)
- Where did you get your mail?
- Where did you go to church?
- Did anyone in your family hunt or fish?
- Where did you go to school? How did you get to school? Can you describe the school?
- What did you do at Christmas time? Special meal?
- What did you do for recreation?
- Can you tell me about social interaction? Between White people and Black people?
- Did your family have a hard time during the Depression?
- Did you have a particular doctor? Home remedies?

**Army Real Estate Maps.** After the initial interviewing was conducted, the researcher located the Army real estate maps that showed the owners of the parcels of land when the Army bought the land in 1941. These were two very large sheets, one for the upper half of the arsenal and the other for the lower half. On each parcel a designation was given, such as A-15, B-45, etc. In the upper right hand corner of each sheet was a key that listed first all the parcels designated with the letter “A” and then the numerical identifier, in order, with the name of the property owner listed by each. These maps were definitely very helpful. However, they were unwieldy to spread out in someone’s home, and looking back and forth from the key to the map took up much precious time.

At the request of the Cultural Resources team at RSA, Alexander Archaeological Consultants prepared for the Army a digital map of the 1941 landowners, with each landowner name printed on the parcel that he or she owned. The map could be printed on a single large page. When the interviewing began in 2005, the researcher carried the condensed map. It was an excellent research tool and greatly facilitated the task of ascertaining where subjects had lived and who their neighbors were. If the person being interviewed said his or her family owned the land, then the parcel was located on the map. If the person had been a tenant farmer or sharecropper, the researcher asked the name of the property owner. Sometimes, the person did not remember the name of the property owner. The subject was asked who lived nearby, as identifying neighbors could lead to location of the property.

**Revisiting the First Subjects Interviewed.** Since the focus of the study had changed since the initial interviews were conducted some years before (one as long as six years earlier), the researcher attempted to contact those people and talk with them again. In some cases, she was successful. In one case the telephone number was no longer in service, and in two instances she got no answer even though calls were made on a number of days during both daytime and evening hours. A relative of one subject said her aunt had suffered a stroke and an interview was no longer feasible. The researcher learned that a man interviewed in 1997 and a woman interviewed in 1999 had since died.

They were good people, and this was sad news. She felt fortunate that she had the opportunity to meet them and preserve their memories in her research.

**Finding Subjects.** The names of elderly people who lived on the land that is now Redstone Arsenal were obtained in a number of ways. One was by asking the person being interviewed if he or she could provide the name and telephone number of someone else who had lived on the arsenal land. This was not always productive. The person who agreed to be interviewed was not always sure that his or her friends or relatives would want to have someone intrude in their lives and didn't want to be the one who gave out names and telephone numbers. If the subject being interviewed did mention a friend or relative but seemed hesitant to give contact information, the subject was asked if he or she would call the person, explain the research, and discuss the possibility of talking with the researcher. The researcher never pressed a subject, and always suggested the phone call be made later so that the subject could speak privately and freely. This did result in a few additional interviews.

One method of finding people to interview was telling whomever she knew that she was endeavoring to write about the old communities that had been on arsenal land, and she wanted to meet elderly people who had lived there. Some arsenal employees suggested names of other arsenal employees who might know someone. Following up these leads resulted in a few interviews. When the researcher explained her plight to a woman she always talked with when she visited the Humane Society of Greater Huntsville, the woman said she herself had lived on the arsenal and consented to be interviewed. When the researcher was waiting for a prolonged period of time in a doctor's office waiting room, she struck up a conversation with others who were waiting, and this resulted in another interview. Before discussing her research with strangers, she first ascertained, in a conversational manner, if the person or persons were originally from Huntsville. If not, the researcher did not pursue the topic further.

It became apparent that the people with whom the researcher had talked were talking with others. The researcher received a number of telephone calls from people who were interested in the fact she was writing about the former communities and the people who lived in them. A few people who called knew from limited oral history and records research that their family had lived "on the arsenal" back in the 1800's; they called to seek information. One person called and asked the researcher to speak about her work at the local meeting of a Black historical society. The researcher agreed, asking that the public announcement of the meeting include a statement that the researcher wanted to meet residents of the pre-arsenal communities on RSA. Three calls were received from people whose families had owned land on what is now the arsenal and had been forced to sell to the War Department in 1941. They were interested in learning more about what the researcher was doing, and they agreed to meet with her; this resulted in interviews.

The Huntsville Madison County Public Library was searched for materials relating to the pre-arsenal communities. This included newspaper articles. Issues dating back to over twenty years ago of both *The Huntsville Times* and *The Redstone Rocket* contained interviews that had been conducted with former residents of Pond Beat and Mullins Flat

as well as other communities on the arsenal. The researcher looked for the names of those interviewed in the Huntsville telephone directory. In one case, the couple interviewed over twenty years before had been quite elderly at the time of the interview, so the name of a son who was mentioned in the article was called.

When the researcher called the numbers, she always began by saying, “This is Beverly Curry, and I work on Redstone Arsenal.” This was to prevent people, who wouldn’t recognize her name, from hanging up because they thought she was a telemarketer. No one hung up.

As to be expected, while the names were the same, some of the people called had no association with the person interviewed years ago. However, some of the calls resulted in interviews. In one instance, the person who answered the telephone had the same name as his father, who had been the one interviewed for the *Redstone Rocket*. His very elderly father lived with him. He talked with his father, and they consented to an interview. In two other instances, the person who answered the telephone was the person sought. The son who had been named in one of the articles was reached and agreed to an interview.

**The Interviews.** The majority of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the subjects. In two instances, elderly gentlemen were met at a local Burger King. The researcher knew from past experience that some elderly gentlemen seem to hesitate over the propriety of having a woman visit them alone in their home. If the researcher sensed any hesitation when she offered to come to a person’s home, she offered to meet in a public place of the person’s choice. One woman preferred to meet the researcher in a meeting room the public library.

In general, most people seemed to find the researcher coming to their home convenient for them. In a number of instances, a daughter or other family member was present when the researcher arrived. It was noted that this person usually hovered in an adjoining room, giving privacy to their elderly relative, but ready to step in. The researcher appreciated the caretaker’s concern and found it appropriate. In almost all cases, the caretaker/relative became interested in the “conversation” of the interview and joined it. Some of the “children” of the subjects were old enough to remember the pre-arsenal days and/or were very knowledgeable about the people and the communities because they had heard about them all their lives.

Based on prior interviewing experience in Black communities, the researcher was aware that many Black people have not had White visitors in their home. This sometimes causes what could be termed an initial sense of formality as the subjects (and/or other family member present) evaluate the researcher. The researcher always began an interview with a question that people are comfortable discussing. She asked the names of the subject’s parents and grandparents, and proceeded to ask other questions about family. The subjects sensed the researcher’s genuine interest in their family, and they enjoyed sharing their memories. The subject would become involved in the conversation, and the comfort level that comes with people discussing a common interest developed and lent itself to the entire interview.

In one instance the researcher went to the home of an elderly Black man who lived alone. He invited her into his small, but tidy, living room. The living room contained two chairs and a sofa that had a coffee table in front of it. The man welcomed the researcher to “have a seat,” indicating a chair, and he sat on the couch.

As they began to talk about where the family lived, the researcher pulled out and unfolded a large map that she wanted the man to look at with her. Eyeing the coffee table on which she could spread out the map, the researcher stood, map in hand, and asked, “May I sit on the sofa beside you so you can look at this with me?” A very apparent look of surprise came over the man’s face. It was as if the researcher had startled him. He quickly recovered and moved over, motioning for the researcher to join him on the sofa. However, he was aware that he had reacted and the researcher had observed, so he felt compelled to explain. He said there was a time when a White woman never would have sat down by a Black man, and he added other comments, such as the fact when he was growing up “on the arsenal,” he would not have spoken to a White woman unless she spoke to him first. At that time, the researcher became aware of a question she had not thought to ask. A question about social interaction between Black people and White people was added to her list. This was a factor to be considered in life in the community.

**The Subjects.** Twenty-nine people were interviewed; of those, twenty-six provided useful information. The youngest did not give her age, but based on her comments, she was judged to be about 75 years old. Most of the subjects were in their eighties. The oldest person who was interviewed (now deceased) was born in 1900, which means she would have been 106 years old this year. The majority of the subjects were Black people, which is representative of the communities in which they lived.

**The Length of the Interviews.** The shortest interview lasted about an hour. This was the oldest person interviewed and she was in frail health. Generally, the interviews lasted about two hours. Some lasted longer. In a few instances the subjects’ were visited twice, and in others they were visited three times or more.

Those who were visited the most were ones who told her to “come back anytime.” When the researcher went back to their homes, she was treated as a welcomed visitor. In conversations that ensued, she mentioned findings that puzzled her and asked if they could provide insight. They provided additional information that allowed pieces to fall into place.

Sometimes subjects were contacted again by telephone and asked for information that would clarify something they had said in the interview. Sometimes additional questions were asked. However, this was kept to a minimum because of time constraints.

In three instances, elderly men who had lived in Pond Beat and had extensive knowledge came to the arsenal and were able to point out places and talk about what had been there. Some of the women who were interviewed expressed a desire to come back to where they had once lived and look around. The first group of three had a general knowledge about where they had lived. Three of the others could not come close to pinpointing the area

where they had lived. Since many areas on the arsenal are closed test areas, one cannot take a group of elderly ladies and go exploring. The results of the trip were anticipated. However, the ladies had seemed to enjoy their outing, and the researcher considered the time investment a courtesy that should be extended to the women because they had given her their time by participating in the interviews.

Interviews with some former residents who live outside of the State of Alabama were conducted by telephone. The duration of the interviews was equal to the endurance of the person called. These telephone calls generally lasted about a half an hour. The researcher judged from the voice (sounds of weariness) of the respondent when she should end the interview. She sometimes paused to ask if the person wanted to “talk a little longer,” providing the subject the opportunity to politely end the call.

### **Additional Research**

In order to better understand the people and the communities of the pre-arsenal land in the setting of the early 1900’s, and also the late 1800’s during which time the subjects’ parents or grandparents lived, the researcher scanned books for information pertinent to the research area and read articles pertaining to that time period that were available in the Huntsville Madison County Library. In the library archives, she read newspapers from that era. The news of daily events and happenings, as well as the advertisements, gave insight to the past.

Many hours were spent studying maps. This included old Madison County road maps, a 1909 county map showing property owners that was drawn by G.W. Jones, and the 1936 U.S.G.S.’ 7.5 topographic maps for the Huntsville, Madison, Farley, and Triana quadrangles. The researcher went to the Cartography Laboratory of the Department of Geography the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa and procured a digital copy of the 1937 Madison County highway map; it shows roads and houses. In addition, the Army real estate map was studied daily to gain an understanding of the geographical relationships between those who had lived on the land and what they were describing during their interviews. Through the constant study of the parcel map, neighborhoods were developing in the mind’s eye.

Historic researcher John P. Rankin was completing his voluntary research documenting the cemeteries on Redstone Arsenal. A few years before, John had asked permission to photograph the cemeteries. This was met with great enthusiasm by the RSA Cultural Resources team. John’s work is quite professional. When John documents a cemetery, he does a rather extensive records search on the families whose names are on the existing monuments. He freely shared his research data on CD’s. The researcher consulted John’s data numerous times, reading census records, wills, and other documents that might provide further information about the people and communities of her study. Furthermore, she frequently talked with John about their shared research interests, and, at times, he contributed his time to digging for further information on historic land owners in a specific area or location. In addition, he put the researcher in contact with others in

the Huntsville community who had expertise in specific areas in which the researcher was searching for a piece of information.

The researcher talked with Raneé' Pruitt in the Heritage Room at the Huntsville Madison County Library about information that might be held by the library but not easily found by traditional research methods, i.e, one must know of its existence in order to look for or ask for it. The researcher also telephoned the editor of the *Old Huntsville* magazine, who is a mature gentleman who has been delving into local history daily for many years. She discussed with him the town of Elko and also moonshine making and stills. While he provided an extensive and detailed account of "the moonshine business" and the politicians and sheriffs who supported it, this is not presented at length in this study; however, it did give the researcher a frame of reference for what she was told by subjects who were interviewed.

The researcher, who is somewhat of a bibliophile, found, at a used book sale, a copy of *Huntsville and Madison County Alabama*, which is a 4-inch by 8-inch paperbound pamphlet originally put out "Under the direction of the Business Men's League of Huntsville, Alabama" in 1908. Inside the cover the following statement is printed:

I found this book in an Antique Store. It is a development booster of Huntsville in the year 1908. The back and first page was gone, and I wouldn't know who to give credit to for compiling it, but it was so fascinating I just had to have it reproduced so others could enjoy it too.

Beneath this, printed in a block was the person's name and address: T.H. Speegle, P.O. Box 677, Huntsville, Alabama. What year T.H. Speegle found this booklet and had it reprinted is not known, but the prior owner of this reproduction wrote his name in it, with the date 1972, thus, the reprint was made in or prior to that year. This booklet presents many details about Huntsville in the early years of the 1900's and it contains many illustrative photographs, a few of which have been copied and included in this report. Having become very familiar with a 1909 map showing pre-arsenal property owners, the researcher recognized the name John Hertzler, the owner of a farm pictured in the book, as being the owner of a number of parcels on pre-arsenal land, and a brief section at the end of this reports speculates about the Hertzler farm being on what is now RSA.

In some instances, the reader has quoted from books still available in select bookstores in Huntsville. The book *Medicine Bags and Bumpy Roads*, written by Jewell S. Goldsmith and Helen D. Fulton in 1985, provided a history of the hospitals and doctors in Madison County. The researcher talked with Helen Fulton, who gave her permission for quoting material and copying relevant photographs for use in this research.

It was stated earlier that the researcher found issues of *The Redstone Rocket* that went back as far as twenty years or more and contained articles that were interviews of former residents of communities that were on the land that is now Redstone Arsenal. Some of the people who were featured in the interviews were located and interviewed. Some people who had been interviewed were not sought out, because they had been very young

when they left the arsenal. Other interviews either contained a few pertinent tidbits or a significant amount of information that would contribute to the knowledge of a former community, but considering the advanced years of the person interviewed, it was highly improbable that the person was still alive. One such person would be 115 years old now. What these people said has been presented verbatim with due credit given to the publication and author of the articles.

The same method of presentation was used in providing relevant information from other publications. In most cases, such as the old newspaper articles and also a University of Alabama (UA) research report that presented an extensive history of land ownership, presenting the information was seen as a way to preserve it in a more accessible manner. The UA report, written in 1989, was printed in limited number and is not readily available to the public.

A handwritten manuscript in which a former resident tells his memories of living in Mullins Flat is contained in a correspondence file at the public library. Copying it and presenting it verbatim makes it accessible to many readers who will remember the man. It will bring back memories to them, preserve his memories, and provide insight about daily life and families in Mullins Flat. The researcher took a copy of the article and read it to two elderly former arsenal residents. They listened with avid interest throughout the 20 minutes or so the researcher read, and they nodded, smiled, and commented to each other about the people who were mentioned. It took them back in time to places they had been and people who they remembered. For those of us who have never been to Mullins Flat, it will allow us to visit the community, meet people and visit their homes, and share their experiences.

### **Limitations of the Study**

When the first interviews were conducted, the researcher did not have the Army real estate map; a large part of the interview time was consumed trying to establish where the subjects had lived. A number of years passed between the first interviews conducted and the last because the researcher was assigned higher priority tasks. During this time the scope of work for a broader ethnoarchaeological study was written, and the focus of the interviewing changed. Many of the initial subjects could not be interviewed again. The time lapse took a toll on the elderly people who had been interviewed.

The primary limitation of the study was time: (1) The study became a priority eight months prior to the researcher's retirement date, and even then other tasks took precedence over the research; (2) the researcher had no one to assist her; (3) identifying subjects and then driving to their homes to interview them, sometimes in the rural areas outside of Huntsville, was time consuming; and (4) library and other document research that was necessary to understanding the historic context took time.

In addition, preparing a manuscript with many photographs, using the only computer software made available to her through the Army, Microsoft Word, which is not friendly to publishing, consumed even more valuable time.

When the researcher's contract with the Army ended on September 1, 2005, and she simultaneously retired from the University of Alabama, she had drafts of some of the interviews written and many stacks of notes, pictures to be downloaded and cropped, and other resource materials to be prepared for inclusion. The RSA Cultural Resources team had no one who could take the materials and complete the work. The researcher stayed in Huntsville and intensely worked on the project for a month after she was no longer employed. At that point, it was necessary for her to leave Huntsville. She spent a number of months working full-time at her home to organize the data and write the report.

### **Presentation of the Information Gained from the Interviews**

Individual interviews are presented with the name of the subject at the top of the first page. Three sections have more than one component and address a specific parcel of land and/or landowners; these sections address Parcel A-17, which was owned by M.G. Chaney at the time of sale to the War Department; the Lee House (J.B. Harris property); and the Union Hill C.P. Presbyterian Church area.

The communities represented are the (1) Union Hill C.P. Presbyterian Church area, (2) the Chaney property and those who lived on farmsteads near the town of Elko, (3) Pond Beat, (4) Mullins Flat, and (5) Hickory Grove. The first interview presented is that of the Reverend McKinley Jones, because this research was conceived because of that interview. The sections that follow it represent the area in the vicinity of the church. The sections that follow are organized in the order that they are listed above.

Sections of the map showing landowner names on the parcels have been inserted in some of the interviews. The map sections are pertinent to the particular interview and those that follow it; they show where the subject lived and where other people who are mentioned lived. Referring to the landowner parcels provides the relationship between people and places. Larger sections of the parcel map are presented in the appendix.

The sections are divided by headings to allow easier reading. As a result, one could skim through the manuscript and find all the headings for a specific topic, for example, "School" and compile the information found on schools. However, this method of using the data would result in a great loss. Families, their histories, neighbors, and relationships have been discussed in detail because it is the people who made the communities. The rest of the information provides the context for their daily lives. In order to know the community, one must read the interviews as part of a whole.

The following section takes the reader on a walk through Pond Beat. It is based on the information found in the interviews of the former residents of Pond Beat.

## A WALK THROUGH POND BEAT

It's the 1930's. I came across the river from Morgan County on the ferry old man Holt runs, and I'm walking up the Pike (South Memorial Parkway).

On the left is the two-room wooden Farley school that has grades one through nine. The school bus is pulling out on the road. Robert Long has driven his son, James, and the other white children from Pond Beat to school, and now he's going back there, where he lives and manages the Schiffman & Co., Inc. land. The day is warm, so the canvas curtains that are on each side of the bus are rolled up. The sides of the bus are wood, which comes up so far, and then there is a long open space, like a window, but there is no glass, only the canvas curtains. The bus goes so slowly that you could get off and run beside it. It would never get up enough speed to blow your hat off.

Inside the school, Lilly Latham is teaching from the primer, and Billy White is being careful not to miss a word, because if he does, she will give him a slap on the cheek. The principal, Mr. P. Roscoe Ivy, is talking with Vivian Fleming, Margaret Hobbs, Eva Jane Bell, James Long, and some of the other students on the playground, which has a good variety of equipment. Behind the school is a big outhouse. It has an awful smell when you go in!

When the white children from Pond Beat finish the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they usually go to high school in New Hope. They can ride on a bus to New Hope from Farley School. Duncan Woodward drives

himself and his sister Edith from their home in Pond Beat to the blacksmith shop that is at the intersection of the Pike and the Farley-Triana Road. He leaves the family automobile there, and they catch the bus. Duncan knows Jack Turner, the blacksmith, because that's who his daddy, Lee Woodward, goes to when he needs any blacksmith work done. Actually, Duncan really likes the blacksmith's sister, and since I can see into the future, I can tell you that he will marry her in time to come.

Across the pike from the Farley school for white children is the Farley school for black children. Its only playground equipment is a swing on the tree and a seesaw out in the open field. No bus is there because black kids walk to school. The schoolhouse is white frame and has two good-sized rooms. The children only attend school when there are no crops to work. Rosetta Thornton, tall, thin, and light-skinned is in her classroom, and the children know she books no nonsense, which is probably why one of her students says, "She's as mean as a snake!"

Now we've passed the blacksmith shop, and I'm turning west on the Farley-Triana Road. I am on my way to the Harris farm, but I'll show you around Pond Beat on the way. In a mile or two we will pass the road going south to where Lehman's Ferry was.

There it is, on the left. Percy Joiner lives down that way. He and his brother Claudie bought land that had been part of the Timmons plantation after Claudie

got back from serving in the Army in World War I. The land they bought is a small piece of the large plantation that once belonged to their grandfather, William Timmons. Their grandmother, Luisa, was his slave. Their sister Lizzie Ward told me about their grandmother.

Luisa had four children by John (Jack) Horton. They took the name of Joiner, a man she later married after she was freed. But she still lived in the cabin where she'd always lived, there on the Timmons plantation. She continued to cook in the fireplace, make ash cakes, and sweep her floor with a sage broom.

The house Percy lives in was on the land when he bought it; he added to it. Claudie built his own house. He had an old steam engine sawmill, and he milled his own timber to build his house. Most men don't own their own land, so they clear someone else's land to have use of it for five years. Then, the land goes back to the owner. When men clear the land, they usually gave the logs (timber) away, which was how Claudie got the timber he milled to build his house.

Claudie rented land to use for growing corn, down where the Army will one day put a recreation area. He had a corral there where he could leave his working stock. When the men worked down there, Parthenia, his wife, took them hot food. One of the men who worked for Claudie Joiner lived in the house of his father Alex, and one lived in a little house on Percy's land. Claudie always called his brother Buster, not Percy.

Claudie continued to cut wood and sell it. He sawed timber into 12 inch cross tie stock, and then he carried it to Hobbs Island, where the NC and S&L Railroad

had a place on the river. The timber was put on a barge and pushed upriver to Guntersville. From there it went by rail to Gadsden.

The tradition of sending cargos to Gadsden this way goes back to the 1800's when paddlewheel steamers docked at the depot. They were the Huntsvillian and the Guntersvillian. Mary Cobb Morris was the first station attendant at the Hobbs Island Depot.

Just like Claudie did, but decades before him, men loaded wagons with their cargoes and traversed dirt roads to reach the depot. One thing hadn't changed—the roads turned to mud when it rained. The men carried long wooden poles to pry the axels out of the mud.

At the depot, the Mercury and Chase railroad had boxcars 40 feet long to load up with the cargo. The boats were 200 feet long, and two or three boxcars were put on each side. The trip to Guntersville was about 20 miles.

Well, sad to say, Claudie Joiner is dead now. He kept on milling trees and working hard, and he died of pneumonia. He is buried on down further to the south, past where the old Timmons slave quarters used to be, in the Timmons Cemetery. Some of the old folks call it Timmons Cemetery because that is where Timmons slaves were buried. After slavery, people who lived nearby continued to be buried there, so it went from being a slave cemetery to a community cemetery. Claudie's son, Walter Joiner, has driven stakes in the ground and put a wire fence around his father's grave. Claudie would have been proud of his son—he works on the farm, and he's going to high school.

Parthenia Joiner is married to Connie Horton now. He had his children and she had her three, so he added on to the house that Claudie built. The house originally had three rooms; now it has three bedrooms, a dining room, and a kitchen. It has fireplaces, but most of the heat comes from a wood stove (cook stove) that heats the kitchen and dining room. It's about four feet long and two feet wide, with eyes on its flat surface. Some people are lucky to have a fireplace. Parthenia is doing well. She doesn't have to get ice from town or buy it a hundred pounds at a time from the wagon that comes around like most other people do, because she has a kerosene powered refrigerator. The Joiner-Horton family also has Delco lights.

Alex Joiner, Claudie and Percy's father, has many children and grandchildren in the area. He lives in a two-room house, and he won't cook, so Percy leaves a horse at his place, and Alex gets on his horse and visits all his neighbors (his children). Sometimes, at dinnertime, old Alex stands between Parthenia's house and Percy's and hollers to ask who has the best dinner, and when he chooses whose cooking he wants, the kids run over and take a plate of food to him.

Continuing west on the Farley-Triana Road, there is the bend where the road turns sharply south. This sharp bend will be taken out someday when the Army comes, changes the road name to Buxton, and paves it. Here, at the bend, up the hill to the right is Cedar Grove Church. It has the same name as the old church it replaced. The original Cedar Hill Church was built of logs and got its name from being built on a hilltop that had many cedar trees on it. The old church was near the community



cemetery (which the Army will one day name the Horton-Joiner Cemetery). It was called the Community Cemetery because people who were buried there didn't necessarily go to the church.

Frank Jacobs owns land by the new church. He and his wife Addie also own additional parcels of land, some of it down by where the old church was. Addie Jacobs (Jacobs was her married name as well), had her own property when she married Frank, so between them, they do have quite a bit of property. They have never had any children and are considered affluent. For sharecroppers, having children is critical to getting a place to work; the children are needed to help tend the crops. However, being landowners, Frank and Addie have their own sharecroppers. Frank is known as being a good man who helps those who are less fortunate.

Continuing west on the Farley-Triana Road, more Jacobs landowners live along the way—Walter, Zera and Dock, and Booker. Dock and Frank are brothers who married sisters, Addie and Zera Jacobs. Booker is a brother to Addie and Zera. Jacobs families live and own property along the road. Frank and Addie have a big, two-story house on the property Addie owns south of the road, neighboring Yancy Horton.

Like Claudie Joiner, Dock Jacobs is a World War I veteran. Sometimes, Dock can be found down in Frank's blacksmith shop. Frank has a racehorse and likes to do harness racing. He takes his racehorse to the county fair.

Zera and Dock own the land on the east side of Horton School. Zera was born in about 1895. She remembers when there was no school, and the community paid someone to teach the children. School only lasted for about a month, and was usually held in a church.

Zera also remembers back in the late 1800's and early 1900's when riders would come from Talucah in Morgan County by ferry boat and deliver the mail before ferrying back home. Now Madison County has mail riders who deliver the mail out to people's mailboxes. Pond Beat is on Route 4.

Zera once owned the piece of land on the north side of the road (she inherited it from her father), right across the road from Horton School. Around 1933, she traded it to her brother, Booker T. Jacobs, for his piece on the east side of the school. Now Booker lives in the house, across the road from the school

The house has two rooms in the front and one room, a kitchen, attached to the back. A fireplace is between the two front rooms. Most people don't have a living room. They have chairs in the bedroom, and when they get ready to eat, they take some of the cane-bottomed chairs to the kitchen. Some people make their own cane chairs. They make their own mattresses as well. The house has a front porch, but no back porch. Behind it, is the smoke house, which has a dirt floor, and a chicken house.

The hen house, built with poles and a tin roof, was important to Zera when she lived over there, because she trades both chickens and eggs to the rolling store when it comes around. She trades them for salt, pepper, and sugar, and, if she has any credit coming after that, she gets some candy for the children. Most of the food she serves her family she has grown herself, and she cans and preserves vegetables and fruit for the winter. The house she lives in now is similar to the one she lived in on the land she traded to Booker.

Zera and Dock don't have a refrigerator. They take their milk down to the spring to keep it cool. Some people lower it in buckets down in the well. Once in a while, Zera and Dock make a treat for the family. Dock brings ice from town and they get out the washtub and put in the milk from their cow, ice, salt, and then more ice, and make the ice cream.

Not many people raise turkeys, but Dock does. At Thanksgiving and Christmas time, he loads his wagon and sells them downtown. His son Alva stays with the wagon while the turkeys are delivered. Afterward, Alva is taken to the town square to a place that has good hamburgers. As the Jacobs are "colored people," they go in a different door to the restaurant than the white people do. A partition keeps the colored people away from the white people.

Young Alva Jacobs always enjoys going to town on the wagon. Another time he gets to go to town is when cotton is taken to the gin. Bates Gin is over in Mullins Flat, but most black people take their cotton downtown to the gin. The black families all got together to start the gin, and many families have certificates

(shares) in it. The gin is on Brown Street.



Taking cotton to Huntsville. Courtesy of the Huntsville Madison County Library.

Sometimes there is excitement right in the neighborhood. Once people could hear shooting and commotion coming from the woods on Kirby Cartwright's property. Cartwright, a white man, doesn't live in Pond Beat. He has a store downtown adjoining Terry's department store, but he has parcels of land here and there, in Pond Beat and Mullins Flat.

The place where the shooting was coming from is in the woods north of the Farley-Triana Road, not far from the back of the house that Booker owns now. The woods go to the creek that separates Pond Beat from Mullins Flat. The police were in the woods breaking up somebody's still. That isn't the only still that is in the woods along the creek. Some of the boys have fun once in awhile figuring out how to relieve a friend or relative of a bit of moonshine.

The younger children create their own entertainment. They roll a car tire or make a flip (slingshot) and shoot at birds and cans. Sometimes they make Johnny walkers (stilts). Alva Jacobs and his brothers have been making a cart. Its wheels are tin cans. They have a straight shaft. The axels are made of wood and

tin cans on either side. A cord is tied on each axel near the front wheels. The cord goes from the axel to each side of a straight stick that is attached to a shaft and used to steer.

Here to the west of Zera's house is Horton School. The children in the two-room Horton School are sitting at shared desks studying. The attention of one girl is held by the pictures of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington that adorn the front wall.

Each schoolroom has an iron pot belly stove. Willie Joiner says that in the winter when it's really cold, her parents (Percy and Ellen) and other parents take wood, cut in about one foot lengths, to Horton School to help keep the heat.

Juliabelle Gunn Toney calls time for recess, but she stays in the room to help two slower readers. Henry Torrence goes outside with the children.

The children are playing stickball. Two students take their turn at drawing water from a nearby well. Some students will stay after school to take their turn at keeping the classrooms clean. Looking up at the school again, I notice small windows, one on each side of the front



entrance, that illuminate the cloakrooms. A little boy, who must be standing on tip-toes, peers out.

Yancy Horton Sr. donated the land for the school. His granddaughter, Pearl, Yancy Jr.'s daughter, says it was built in 1919, the year she was born. Building the school came about because the people of Pond Beat take advantage of opportunities that will help them get ahead in the world. They heard about Julius Rosenwald.

Julius Rosenwald, the son of a German-Jewish immigrant who had reached the peak of his business career as president of Sears, Roebuck & Company, had begun what could be called his second career as a philanthropist. He knew that only 20 percent of the black children were enrolled in school in Alabama (as compared to 60 percent of the white children), and "in all the South there was not a single standard 8<sup>th</sup> grade rural Negro public school" nor any formal high school" (Dalin 1998:38).

Rosenwald was invited to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama by Booker T. Washington. They developed a plan to make matching grants available to rural communities for education (Rohr 2001). Yancy Horton gave his land for the school, and he and other members of the community cleared the land and gave their labor to build it. This was the match for the Rosenwald grant.



**Going to clear the land for Horton School.**

In Mullins Flat, Adolphus Love gave the land for a school, and the people of the

community gave their labor, thus, a grant was obtained and a Rosenwald School was built in Mullins Flat. It is called Silver Hill School. Altogether, six Rosenwald schools were built for rural black children in Madison County.

#### **The Silverhill School in Mullins Flat.**



Horton School has a baseball club. Most people can't afford baseball uniforms for their children; the players wear whatever they have. Sometimes the children play a team from Talucah, across the river (near where Somerville is). They take the ferry across the river. The ferry is a rowboat, so only three or four people can come across at a time. It costs 25 cents to ride across.

Zera's son Alva likes the picnics that are held at the Horton School. The school is like a community center. Programs are held at the school as well as at Cedar Grove Church. There are box suppers and little carnivals. Alva always enjoys those. There is always singing and programs at Christmas time.

Of course, Alva likes Christmas time for a number of reasons. He smiles when he thinks of the peppermint sticks that he gets at Christmas, because they are big around, and he takes a hammer and cracks a bit off at a time. He doesn't get numerous gifts, but there is always

something—a rubber ball, a cap pistol, oranges, nuts and lots of fruit.

Everybody in the community helps each other. Neighbors watch and help with each other's children. When people get their work done, they help others with theirs. They visit their sick friends and neighbors to help with chores and take food. However, the black people do generally keep to themselves. There is less opportunity for problems that way.

Yancy Horton is a pillar of the Pond Beat Community. His land goes from here along the Farley-Triana Road (Buxton) by the school, down the east side of the road (McAlpine) that goes south toward the river. He has another, smaller, parcel closer to the river.

Yancy has a big, colonial style house with a porch around the front, one side, and the back. It has six rooms and a dining room. The house is wood, but the steps leading up to it are brick. When they enter the house, they walk into a hallway. Three of the rooms are bedrooms, each with a closet. A fourth room is kept for entertaining.

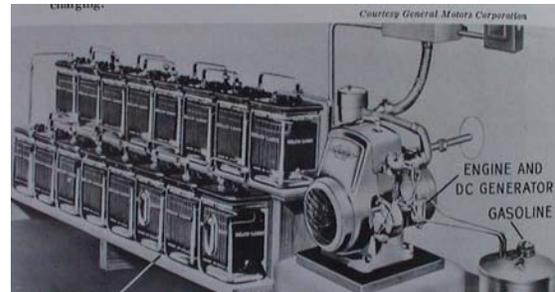
The floors are hardwood, except in the kitchen and dining room. They have linoleum on the floor, which is more practical. Three cement steps go up to the back porch. The back door opens into the kitchen; from it the dining room is entered. Oil lamps light the house.

To get water for the house, they crank the wooden handle of the pump. A pipe from the well runs out to provide water for the barnyard.

Sometimes the men work at night. Yancy has a gas light up on a post, and a Delco light in the yard, lighting the way

from the house to the barn. The lamp is like the one an automobile has.

Yancy uses the Delco battery system for running equipment, and when he does, you can hear the “pat-pat-pat-pat” sound of the motor. It runs on gasoline and has a big flywheel inside. It has to be cranked to start it, and once in a while the oil has to be changed to maintain it.



In the barnyard Yancy Horton has a big tank of gasoline and a pump. Yancy and Frank Jacobs fill up their tractors here instead of buying gas at the store.

Frank and Addie Jacobs are Yancy Horton's neighbors. They live in a big house to the east of the Hortons. They built a brick house after their former house burned. The Jacobs' property and Horton's is divided by a dirt road. Addie's sister Zera lives on property to the north of hers, and Addie's brother Ernest has a small piece of land to the south of Addie.

Going down the road (McAlpine) toward the river, past Yancy Horton's place, there is a number of small houses. Shab Tolbert lives down there in a sharecropper house; he works Schiffman land. Roy Hastings lives south of him. Wattie Timmons lives close to the river.

About a quarter of a mile south of Hastings is Deliah Clay's place. He never uses that first name, though. He signs his name as “D.L. Clay,” and

everyone knows him as Buddy. Buddy, deaf now, in his older years, is a tenant farmer on the Schiffman property. He owns his own mules and equipment. His wife's name is Octavia. Her maiden name was Jamar. Octavia's mother, Lettie, was a cook on the James Jamar plantation and had three children fathered by the old white master. Even though the days of slavery were over (her oldest was born in 1876), she had no recourse in this, so about 1882, when her youngest was a babe in arms, she took the children and ran away.

Octavia and Buddy don't have any grass in their yard. It is hard packed dirt, but Octavia sweeps the dirt, and it looks tidy. They have a vegetable garden and their own cows for milk, and hogs and chickens. During the winter, Buddy kills a hog and peddles pork and eggs to the other homes in Pond Beat.

About a quarter mile further south, Loach Robertson lives in a tenant house. South, beyond him, is the Blount place, an old-style square plank house that appears to have about six rooms. Like most houses, it has a tin roof. Blount has his own barn and smoke house.

A dirt road cuts through the Blount property. Nick Fitchard owns a little piece of land bordered by Blounts' property on the north and west, and partially bordered by the road south to the river. Immediately beside the road, as if carved out of Fitchard's property, is the New Mount Olive Church, and a cemetery is beside it. Black people use the church and cemetery.

On down the road, the Robert Long family lives on the Schiffman and Co., Inc. land. Robert is the land manager so

it's a nice house. The Longs know the house was built in 1855 because a piece of glass over the front door has "W.F. Owen 1855" engraved in it. It's a colonial style house with round columns out front. The roof is tin.

The outside of the house is yellow poplar weather boarding (overlapping planks), painted solid white. All of the doors on the house are mahogany. The front doors, on the north side of the house, are double doors. The house has big windows.

Steps go up to the front porch. Entering the front door, one steps into a hall, about 12 feet wide, which divides the house. The walls are plastered. An inside stairway goes up to a landing and a hall. Four bedrooms are upstairs. Downstairs, the two rooms on the west side of the hall are used as bedrooms. The room on the east side of the hall is the living room. The dining room is directly behind it.

Mrs. Long cooks on a white enamel Warm Morning stove that stands on legs. It's the best kind of stove you can buy. It has a reserve on it to heat water. The top is solid, except for the round "eyes," which can be lifted out, and then a pot can be set in the fire. The firebox is on the outside of the stove; it vents out through a flue. The stove was purchased at Rex Harrison's store on the corner of the square in Huntsville, which is where most people buy their stove. The icebox in the kitchen holds about a hundred pounds of ice, which lasts about four days in the summertime. The ice truck comes around twice a week. Sometimes the Longs buy a little extra to make ice cream.

In the dining room, a glassed-in cabinet extends from the east wall to the doorway to the living room. Beyond the doorway is a fireplace. It is shared with the kitchen; it opens in each of the rooms. It is built up to the second floor and is shared by the two bedrooms above. On the other side of the hallway, the two downstairs bedrooms share a fireplace that is built into the wall between them, and it goes on up to be shared by the two bedrooms above.

The back porch has steps going up to it; they are five feet wide. A shed is under the high back porch; the steps down to the basement are also under the porch. The door to the basement is on the east side. The basement has solid brick walls, and the ceiling is high enough for one to walk in without bending.

The Long's chicken house faces the road, and the smoke house is behind it. The chicken house has horizontal plank sides, like the house, but its sides aren't stripped. The poles that hold it up are shorter in the front, so the roof slopes downward. A T-model car is in the garage, which is up front, to the side of the house.

The outhouse is south of the house, in a more direct line with the center of the house from the back steps. The family members absolutely do not throw thrash or discarded items in their outhouse.

The Longs get their water from a cistern, which is big and round, with concrete walls all the way down. The gutter water runs into it. The Longs use water from the cistern for bathing. There's a hand pump in front of the house, but the well is deep and hard to pump.

Standing on the front porch, looking to the north, about 500 feet away, a cemetery is on a little hill. The Longs call it the Owen Cemetery. They've always heard that the man who built the house is buried there. When he died, his daughter married a man named Darwin, who moved in the house.

Darwin didn't know anything about agriculture. He put in many kinds of fruit trees—peach, apples, pear, and plums, and he had a cannery. Usually, the Darwins put the fruit up in half-gallon jars. The orchard isn't here now, but Robert Long remembers it. Darwin borrowed money from Schiffman & Co., Inc. That's how the land came to be owned by Schiffman & Co., Inc. Darwin lost it to them during the depression. They had all the fruit trees destroyed, and now the land is in cotton.

In front of the house, the side of the road is layered with rock to keep it from washing. The WPA came in and put in some concrete, but the Civilian Conservation Corps put in a lot of terracing. Some World War I soldiers worked at it. There are headwalls where the water empties into the road ditch; the rock is layered in the mouth.

Robert Long goes to Lehman's Ferry, down on the river to the east of Schiffman property to get fertilizer in 200 pound sacks. Lime and most of the agricultural products come in from Charlotte and Nashville. Rousters come out, carrying the bags to the wagons, sometimes singing a song as they work. Some rousters are white men and some are black men.

Robert Long has mules on the farm. Once in a while, the veterinary, Dr.

Steele, comes out and grinds their teeth down so they can eat better. The older mules get, the longer their teeth get, and then they can't bite so well.

Twenty-nine families live on Schiffman land. Some sharecropper houses have no amenities at all, not even an outhouse. Some of them are pitiful, rotting square log cabins. Some houses are in better condition.

Most of the people who live down close to the river are poor. Some of them fish and sell their catch.

The one thing that almost everybody has is a garden. Most people have a chicken house. Most women can food in jars. Many people have their own pigs and a cow for milk. Connie and Collis Lacy live down toward the river, and they have a big garden. They also have a two-decker chicken house with a slanted tin roof out behind their house. It's got a wire mesh fence around it.

Mrs. Lacy cans her vegetables and makes everything herself. Probably the only thing she doesn't sew for the family is bib overalls, and those are bought at Terry's Department Store in Huntsville.

Like many other women, Mrs. Lacy uses flour, feed, and fertilizer sacks to make clothes, even underwear. The fertilizer bags have to be washed over and over to get all the fertilizer out, and that surely is rough on the hands. This reminds me of what a white boy who lives up by the mountain east of the Chaney plantation says. His mother uses the fertilizer bags to make his underwear, and sometimes she doesn't get all the numbers bleached out, so he is "4-10-7."

The Lacy house, surrounded by pine trees, is up on stilts. It has two rooms in front and a kitchen in the back. The kids sleep on pallets on the floor. Their nearest neighbors are Frank Durham and his family, across the way and up by the mountain. The Durhams are white, have four or five children, and are very poor. They fish and sell fish in the neighborhood.

When they come to the Lacy house to borrow something, Mrs. Lacy always gives them some food. That's what neighbors do. Apparently, the Durhams don't mind Mrs. Lacy being black, and she doesn't mind them being white. Down here in the woods, with no one to observe or comment on proprieties based on race, they are neighbors who get along. Young Cleophus Lacy considers his own home as being like a shack, and he knows his family is poor, but he sees the Durhams as being "more poor than we are."

When the river gets high, there is always some flooding down here in the bottomland, and fish swim into the ponds. Some of the men put chicken wire over the channels into the ponds to keep the fish from swimming back out. There are all sizes of ponds. You can tell when the river is high, because the water rises in the blue holes (sink holes). They usually go dry about August. Some of the boys seine them. Walter Joiner always seines Rock Pond up by his mother Parthenia's house. He takes fish home to eat, and he shares some with the elderly people he knows.

While moonshine stills are hidden away up north of the Farley-Triana Road and over near Horton's Ford, it wouldn't be surprising to find one down this way.

You can definitely find a barrel or two of homebrew stashed in the spring. Some of the little boys sneak down and pull the plug out of one and have a sample. I heard that Cleophus Lacy and his buddies have done that.

The Lacy family isn't as poor as some, because they have a horse and a wagon of their own. They also have a radio. It runs off a big battery (not a Delco battery) and has an antenna. The battery sets right next to the radio. One of the nephews is handy with wires, and he ran a copper wire out to a ground. The ground is a metal stake or post in the ground. Every once in awhile, the battery goes down, and baking soda is put in it. Listening to the radio is a treat, and on Friday nights, the neighbors gather at the Lacy's house to listen to the boxing matches. Joe Louis is black and a favored contender. The Lacys don't allow any drinking at their house though.

They are a good hard-working family, and the kids always enjoy playing together. Even though they don't have much cash money, the Lacy parents try to make a good life for their children. At Christmastime, Mr. Lacy takes the boys out to the woods to cut down a tree. They set up the tree, and then Mrs. Lacy gathers up little red berries that grow in the woods and strings them up with thread. The children all think they are pretty. Mrs. Lacy uses colored paper that the children bring home from Horton School and a scissors to make curls of the strips. Each of the children gets one toy for Christmas, and no more, but they have fruit and plenty of food.

Starting north, back up the road, on the opposite side from the Schiffman land is the Anderson property, and above that,

the Woodwards. Ruby Eslick Woodward used to own the store in Pond Beat. She ran the store and her husband did the farming. However, they sold the store and the house beside it to A.C. Turner when she and her husband, Lee Woodward, moved to his father's house.

The John Woodward house has four rooms and it faces a lane that comes off the main road (McAlpine). Two doors are on the front of the house, but the family doesn't use them much, because the bedrooms are in the front of the house. The bedroom on the right is larger than the other one; the bedrooms have fireplaces for heat.

The two rooms in the rear of the house are used as a kitchen and dining room. Many years ago, when John Woodward was raising his family, the room now used as a dining room was a bedroom, so a Warm Morning heater is in there. The kitchen just had an icebox then, but when Lee and Ruby moved into the house, Lee bought a refrigerator that burns kerosene. The smell of kerosene permeates the air when it is burning.

Behind the house is a big fenced-in garden. The Woodwards have to go through the garden and out the gate to get to the outhouse. Like the house, the outhouse is built of yellow poplar and has a tin roof; it's a two-seater.

The well is all the way down the hill from the house, so every bit of water has to be carried up to the house in buckets. Just beyond the well, the terrain starts sloping up to the mountain. The family cemetery is on the mountain.

Washing clothes is done by the well, so a big black iron pot stays there. When

Ruby is ready to wash clothes, Lee builds a fire under the pot. The clothesline is right there, handy for hanging the clothes to dry. Of course, the clothes are carried back up to the house for ironing. The flat irons have to be heated on the stove. Mandy, who lives in a log tenant house on the property, but not close to the big house, comes to help on washing and ironing days.

Ruby works in the vegetable garden, and raises chickens, and always helps with salting down the hog after one is butchered. She cans sausages and also puts some sausages in hand-sewn bags to hang in the smoke house.

Lee raises cotton and corn, but no tobacco. He has a tractor and a mule. Lee takes his cotton to the gin in Triana. The Woodwards have always grown lots of vegetables. During the Depression they did fairly well because they had so much land for growing vegetables. They didn't get much for cotton and corn, but they took vegetables to Huntsville to cafes and small grocery stores. If they didn't sell them all that way, they went into the villages and did door-to-door selling.

Lee Woodward raises a small patch of cane, too. He takes that to Dave Barley to crush. It's about time we started back up the road from the river (McAlpine) and returned to the Farley-Triana Road. I'll show you the store and point out to you where Dave Barley lives when we get back on the main road, but we'll see the Methodist church on the way.

Well, here we are, approaching the intersection with the Farley-Triana Road, but first, over on the left, just

south of the main road, is the Methodist Church. It's for white people.

The church sanctuary isn't very big, but then churches generally aren't very big. The Sunday school rooms are off to one side in the back, and in the front are about fifteen pews. The pews aren't solid wood; they are constructed with wooden slats. To the side of the pulpit is a choir loft with five or six rows of benches. There is no regular preacher now. The one who does come is an evangelist.

Back when there was a regular preacher on Sunday nights, Juanita White Lassiter and her brothers always came walking up the road. As they walked up the road to church, they stopped to gather their friends, who tagged along with them. Juanita lives on Farley Triana Road, about a mile to the west of here. The Harris family members came here. It was Sam Harris, J.B.'s son, who milled the lumber for the church, and he and other men of the community built it.

Blacks don't come to this church. The white folks say that blacks are friendly, but they know not to cross the line. Some of the white people are going to church in Farley now, because there aren't enough people attending to, as one fellow said, make it interesting, and there's no regular preacher.

Well, here we are at the intersection. Right in front of us, on the north side of the road, is A.C. Turner's store. A.C. Turner is a hefty-built man who is bald except for a ring of hair around his head. Looking forward in time, the location of Turner's store is where "Little Vietnam" will be on the arsenal before the area becomes part of McKinley Range. However, right now, we are looking at

the store. Aside from there being a store on the property, it is also a 40-acre farm with a house and barn. The store is right along the road. The house is set back from the road, about 200 feet west of the store. The barn is west of the house.

The store has one room with a partitioned storage area on the east side, about midway to the back. It is about 20 feet wide by about 50 feet long. It is built up on stilts because when the river comes up, the area floods. Steps go up to the front door. It seems like the house is built on a slope because the front steps are higher up than the back ones.

Among the items A.C. Turner sells are bologna, cheese, canned foods, dried beans, overalls, and denim shirts. He buys his produce from Lee Woodward. Turner drives to Huntsville in his Model T Ford truck to buy groceries from the Ragland brothers, grocery wholesalers, in Huntsville.

In front of the store, a gas pump is under a tin canopy. Kerosene is sold also. The gas pump is a two-way pump, a backwards and forwards pump. A glass globe is on the top. It holds at least five gallons of gas. The globe fills, and the gas flows down into the automobile.

A driveway is between the house and the store, and a garage is at the end of it. The outhouse is over closer to the house. The store shares the outhouse with the house.

Lucinda (Luci) Turner helps in the store so she needs help at home. Mae King, a black woman, cooks for the family. She rules the kitchen. A.C. Turner has his divorced daughter Ida Neal and her sons living in his household. One of his

grandsons warns about Mae King. He says not to go in the kitchen between meals, or she'll tear you up. She's really more than a cook to the family, as that same grandson of Turner's says when he was younger, she would sit and rock him or she would beat his butt—which ever came in handy. Mae King's husband is James King.

Luci Turner has a gasoline-operated washing machine. It has a one-cylinder engine. After the clothes wash, she rinses them in a tub. She has two rinse tubs. The washer is out in the garage.

Luci is always busy. She cans fruits and vegetables, and after the hogs are butchered, she cans sausages and also puts some up in bags. She has a big iron pot outside that she uses for rendering the fat when the hogs are butchered. She makes lye soap in the same pot.

A.C. Turner is raising his grandsons to know how to work. Aside from the 40 acres there at the store, he rents bottomland down by the river for the boys to work. It is on the right side of the road as you go south toward the River (down McAlpine).

There's a pond along the road, and the boys back the wagon off in the pond to let the wheels swell up. The wheels are wood, so they shrink when they dry up. The tracks come off if you don't keep the wheels swelled up.

When the Neal boys work the bottomland, they sometimes camp out down there. Sometimes they cook something over a fire and sometimes somebody from home brings them food. They sleep on the ground sometimes, and sometimes in the wagon. They get

so tired that they sleep where they pass out.

There isn't much recreation time for the Neal brothers. They go to Farley School, but their Grandpa Turner gives them a list every day of what they have to do, and if they don't do it, they get switched. They plant, cultivate, and follow the mules. They hand-pick the cotton. Their grandfather shares the profit with them.

The only recreation for the Neal brothers is occasionally being allowed to go in the truck to town with their grandfather when he buys supplies. However, A.C. Turner does have a battery-operated radio, and they listen to it some times.

A.C. Turner always keeps busy. Aside from the store and the farm, he walks down to the river regularly, all through the winter and the summer, and writes down how much the river rises and falls. He reports the figures to the TVA office in Knoxville.

The Tolberts live on the south side of the road across from Turner. Like the Turner family, they are white people. Stella Tolbert married a McWhorter, so it will probably be called McWhorter property eventually. They have a dogtrot style house, with two rooms on either side of the central hall. It is the only house on their property; they farm their own land.

There is a little cemetery on their land. Most of the graves are not marked; there is one tombstone that you can see. Since we can look ahead into the future, we know that the lone tombstone will be removed and no one will know the cemetery existed.

While A.C. Turner's parcel of land is small, only 40 acres, it is bordered to the north by a much larger parcel that is owned by David Barley Sr. Some people call him "Old Dave" Barley, because he has a handsome son whose name is Dave. Dave Barley is described as so light he looks like a white man. He is known and highly regarded throughout the Pond Beat and Mullins Flat area. Like Frank Jacobs and Yancy Horton, he is another pillar of the Pond Beat community. Everyone seems to have a good word to say about Dave Barley.

Dave Barley broke with tradition when he let a white sharecropper live on his land, and somebody, anonymously of course, put a letter in his mailbox about that. Dave thought on the matter some, thinking about who might have written the letter, and then he got on his horse and rode around and talked to a few people. Not another word was said about the white sharecropper.

People, both black and white, take their cane to Dave Barley to get it crushed. The Barley home is about 200 yards from the road, and the crusher is near the back of the house. The crusher is mule-drawn and fed by hand. The juice goes into the barrel and then drains out through a pipe into the copper pan where it's cooked down.

Dave has a rock furnace that is about eight feet long and four feet wide, with a smokestack on one end. He uses a long copper pan with divisions in it. As the juice cooks down, he moves it with a paddle to the front of the pan. He cooks it until the steam quits coming off of it, and then he opens the tap on the end of the pan so it will run out.

Dave always puts his syrup in buckets; however, some people go to the Coca Cola plant in Huntsville, get wooden barrels, wash them up, and bring them to take their sorghum home. Of course, the residue from this syrup making doesn't go to waste. Molasses strap is used for making home brew and moonshine. Home brew is alcoholic. It has hops in it. You have to let it "breathe" before you bottle it. Most of the people make home brew now days.

We need to move on now, another mile up the road to the west. It's getting late, and there is one more family I'd like to introduce, the Harris family.

There is the cemetery up on the north side of the road. The road is curving a bit, and as it starts to straighten out, we see a small house on the south side of the road.

That's where Billy White lives. He goes to Farley School. His daddy is Juanita Lassiter's brother. Juanita and her husband Millburn used to live in one of the sharecropper houses over on this side of the road. It was a small place, so after they had their first child, they moved across the road to live in the big house with Millburn's grandparents, Martha and J.B. Harris.

Billy's father is a sharecropper, and his family has a three-room house. It's front door faces north to the Farley-Triana Road. Beds are in both of the front rooms, but one of the rooms is also used as a living room. The kitchen is the back room. They don't have a barn, but they do have a one-hole outhouse with a pit dug beneath it.

Three more small houses are on the south side of the road. One is west and a bit south of the White's house. The second is west of the White's and up closer to the road—the Toodleman's live there. Bill calls Mrs. Toodleman "Aunt Millie." She is black. A white person doesn't call a black woman "Mrs."

Billy White and his friends like Aunt Millie because she lets them smoke rabbit tobacco. Billy says all the kids smoke it. It grows in the fields among a lot of sage and has grayish-green leaves that are almost 3 inches long and have white fuzz.

The third house is directly across the field to the southwest of where the Whites live. The Broiles house is an antebellum style house with two stories. Those folks have a two-seater outhouse. [Mr. Broiles sold his house to a fellow from Indiana in 1939; before he arrived, everybody had heard he was a Republican, and they couldn't wait to see him because they had never seen one of those.]

Well, there's the J.B. Harris house. It's up the hill on the north side of the road. Some people call it the Lee House. It's a two-story white house, with four big rooms, two on each side of the large foyer where the stairway curves to the second floor. From the downstairs room on the right there is an entryway into the kitchen and eating area, and behind that is the original section of the house, built 20 years earlier than the two-story section added by Houston Lee when he married Charity Cooper. The way it's all put together, it makes a z-shape.

After J.B.'s son, Sam, started his family, he built a house across from his father's.

It's a one-story house with a porch across the front. Sam and his wife live there with their sons and daughter Corrine. One of the sons is named Sam after his father. J.B. is getting older now, so Sam runs the farm [J.B. died in 1939]. There is always activity at the big house. Juanita and Millburn and their children live there, and J.B. and Martha's granddaughter, Ima Jean. When the TVA people came, they boarded with J.B. and Martha. TVA acquired about 200 acres of Harris property. Some of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) people might have stayed there also.

Martha Harris keeps a bottle of quinine in the middle of the kitchen table, and everyone takes some every day to ward off malaria. Across the way, Sam's wife has a bottle of Grove's Chill Tonic, and she gives her children a dose of it every morning for the same purpose.

After TVA drained off some of the areas where mosquitoes breed, the problem wasn't quite as bad, but there are always mosquitoes, and if they are bad up here on the hill, you can imagine what it is like for the sharecroppers who live down in the bottomlands.

The Harris family always has plenty of food. They grow string beans, corn, okra, tomatoes, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, field peas, watermelon, and cantaloupe. They take cane they grow to Dave Barley for his mule driven press to crush and make molasses.

Juanita Lassiter makes what she says is a non-alcoholic brew from the sugar cane seeds that are obtained during the molasses-making process. She laughs and calls it "California beer," but she doesn't explain why.

When she makes the beer, she puts the seed mush into a five-gallon churn with water and syrup. She works the churn and then leaves the concoction to ferment for a couple of days. Then she empties the churn and bottles up the beer. She says you can only make what you can drink, because if you leave it too long, it will explode. She says everybody makes it.

Jennie Harris (Sam's wife) does most of the cooking for her family, but she has "Uncle" Jim Toodleman to wash the dishes, and he helps by watching over the pots while the food is cooking.

The family always has their big meal in the middle of the day. They call the noon meal dinner. The meals are breakfast, dinner and supper (the term "lunch" is not used). Over in the big house, Martha Harris has a woman, Cleo, who comes in after each meal to clean up. She also comes on Sunday afternoons. If a turkey is to be had for a holiday dinner, it is also Cleo's job to cut its head off and prepare it for cooking.

Martha Harris raises the turkeys. They run around the yard, and Juanita is afraid of them. Martha Harris inoculates the turkeys herself when they need it.

Aunt Betty Timmons does the laundry for the Harris family. Sam's wife has never ironed and doesn't know how. Aunt Betty comes on washday and gets the clothes from Sam's wife and takes them down to the big house. She washes everyone's clothes there. Aunt Betty boils all the white clothes.

Everyone in the area knows the big white house where J.B. Harris lives and that, back in time, it was Charity Cooper Lee and her husband who built it up on the hill. Back in the days of Charity Cooper Lee, what is now the Harris place was a plantation with slaves. The row of small log houses just northwest of the house is said to have been slave cabins back then. Sharecroppers live in the cabins now. Back in Lee's time, this is probably where the slaves that served the big house lived.

The garage, which is north of the house, is the former plantation carriage house. The small set of cement steps just setting there, leading to nowhere—that's what people used to assist them in stepping up into the high carriages they would pull up beside it.

Ten or so small houses are on the Harris place. John Blackburn (a white man) is one of Sam's sharecroppers. The house that he lives in is built of rough planks, about 12 inches wide. The planks are vertical, with 3-inch strips nailed over the cracks between the boards. The roof is tin. The walls inside are papered with heavy wallpaper. It serves to insulate a bit. It's a solid color with no pattern. The house has five rooms, which is larger than most of the houses, but John Blackburn has eleven children. Sam furnishes John with mules, and he gets half of what John grows. Some people say that Sam splits the cost of fertilizer and seeds with his sharecroppers.

Sam has about a thousand acres, with 600 in cotton, corn, and other crops. He has 10 or 15 acres in cantaloupes, and he and Millburn raise sweet potatoes, which they store in the front part of the basement under the big house. They've

got a heater down there, run by coal oil, which they run at a certain temperature until the potatoes are dried out, then they take them to market. They dig in September and take them to market around Thanksgiving. So, Sam is a truck farmer among other things.

Sam also has a combine and a hay bailer. When he's ready to do hay, he brings the bailer up, takes the wheels off, and blocks it so it is stationary. The hay feeds into the hopper. The men lay the hay on a slide. They have to shock the hay on poles so it will dry out before they bail it, or it will mold. The hay is cut flat with a 16-foot-wide hay rake, pulled up, and stacked around a framed [braced] 8-foot long pole in the ground, using the slide or runner. The results are a three-sided pyramid. The hay will stay like this until spring without rotting; however, sometimes logs are put around it, because the cows will eat a hole in it.

Most old plantations had a steam driven mill. Sam had one by a pond, but he quit using his and has a big old tractor with a belt drive. The tractor has a power take-off on the side where each wheel is. If anybody brings logs, Sam parks the tractor and blocks it. Everything is a barter system. He mills logs for a percentage. The sawmill is on a side road close to the big house. That was the old slave quarters road. It goes all the way back down to the river.

Sam also uses the tractor to run the gristmill. People bring their corn to Sam. If they don't want to wait for it to be ground, he weighs it and gives them a percentage from meal he has already ground. He uses a scoop about the size of a gallon bucket to put the meal in a bag for them. Sometimes another fellow

Sam works in a big shed close to the house. It's made of rough slab lumber, which means saw marks and second cut, about 1 x 12 with 1 x 4's to cover the cracks (board and batten). The shed has one big room and a little kitchen leaned off. Sam always has something going on in his shop.

Walter Joiner, a black youth (Claudie and Parthenia Joiner Horton's son) comes to Sam's shop and sometimes stays a half a day. He likes to see the work Sam does at the forge, and he learns while he watches. He says Sam Harris will help anyone who has a desire to learn and "to do." Sam tells Walter about what he's doing, and Walter helps out by cranking the bellows.

Sam is creative. On his gristmill he made a spider gear (a small wheel that meshes inside a larger wheel) out of wood. Sam

makes whatever he wants out of wood and steel. He made rakes that are about 16 feet wide to drag and break up dirt clods. To make them, he would heat long spikes, have a hole drilled in the timber, and let the spike burn itself in and wedge. The spikes would usually stand up or be tilted, but Sam put a lever on it. The spikes are set in a small 6 foot by 6 foot log, with a lever of oak. He notches every other log, staggering the holes, so he won't have two spikes dragging in the same place.

In addition to everything else, Sam has one of the best fishing ponds around. He built some wooden boats, which he rents to people who want to go and fish on the pond. The pond has become a bit of a recreational place where people gather.

It's time for us to leave Pond Beat. I hope you've enjoyed the journey.



**Groundbreaking day for the Horton School. The men pictured were the trustees of the school. They were: Frank Jacobs, Henry Lacy, Wattie Timmons, Yancy Horton, and Alva Jacobs. Yancy Horton donated the land for the school; he and the people of the Pond Beat community built it. [Alva Jacobs who is pictured was the uncle of the boy of the same name who is in the story presented above.]** NOTE: According to the source of this photograph, Pearl Horton Higgenbotham, when the photograph was published in the July 2, 1980 edition of the *Redstone Rocket*, the men were identified incorrectly, thus, they may be identified incorrectly in other places where the photograph is on record.

## **THE REVEREND MCKINLEY JONES INTERVIEWS AND RELATED RESEARCH**

The researcher was the Staff Archaeologist at Redstone Arsenal (RSA) when she first met McKinley Jones in November of 1996. Dan Aughinbaugh on RSA Test Area 6 told her an elderly Black man who had lived in the TA 6 area prior to 1941 when the Government took ownership of the land regularly visited the place in the woods where “the church he went to had been.” Auginbaugh told Curry if she were interested in the history of the area, she should meet Reverend Jones. The researcher called the Reverend McKinley Jones, and he agreed to come to her office. This was the first of many meetings and telephone conversations with McKinley Jones, the last being in September of 2005.

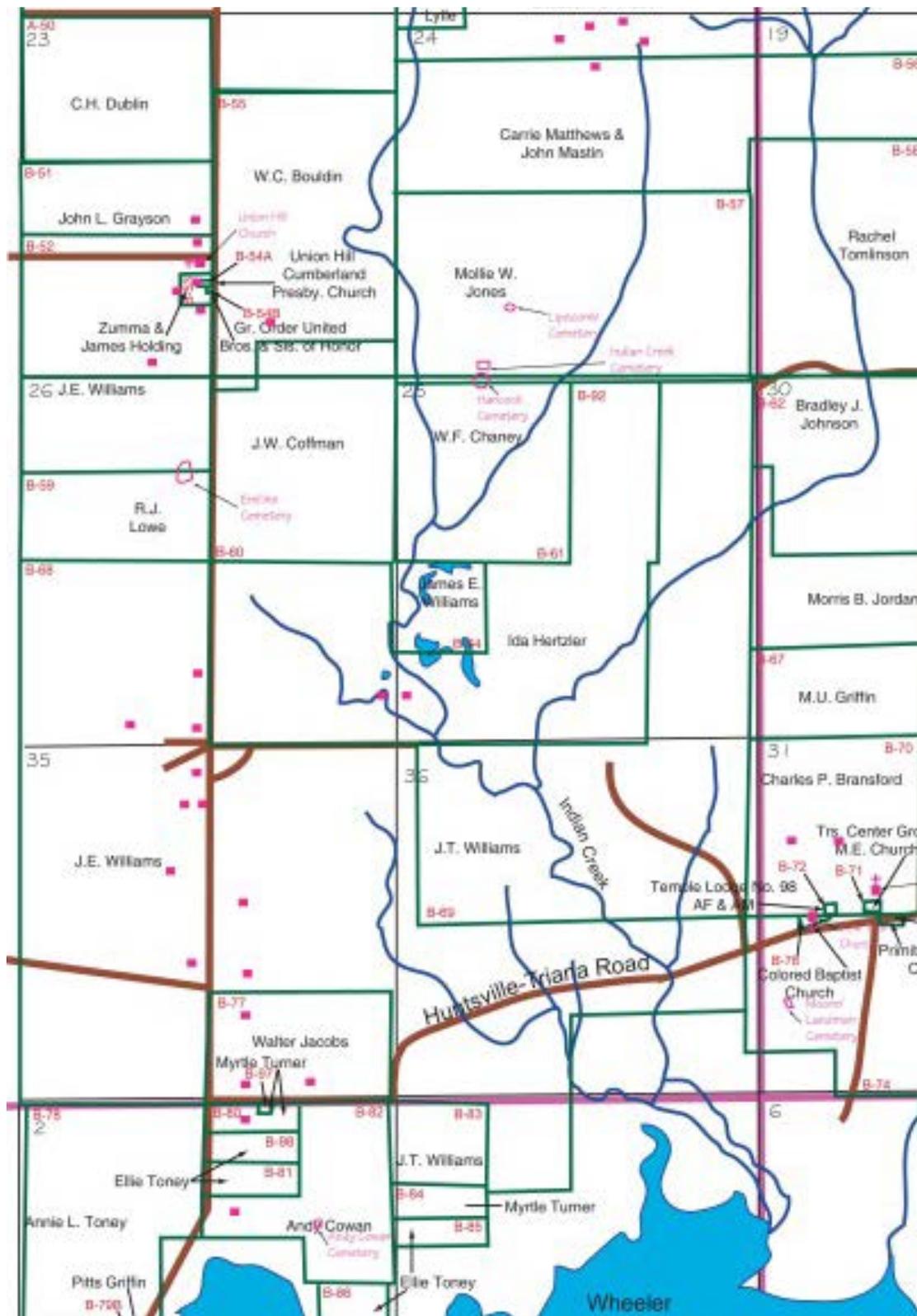
When the researcher and Jones met, he explained that place he visited was the site of the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which he and his family had attended. Reverend Jones explained that the church “moved out in 1941 when the government acquired the property.” He said that Union Hill’s congregation split: “Some went to Elizabeth in Madison; others lived in the Huntsville area and in 1947 organized the present Union Hill church, located on Nevels Drive, where I am pastor now.”

Reverend Jones agreed to visit again and to take the researcher to the site of the church. He had limited time to spare during each of their visits as he had a full schedule ministering to his parishioners, preparing his sermons, preaching funerals, and doing baptisms as well as being asked to attend other meetings. In the years to come, the researcher learned that Reverend Jones, a quiet, conservative, and wise man, is a well-known figure in the Black community in Huntsville and the surrounding area. He is regarded with great respect and warm affection because of the life he has lived in helping others.

At the second meeting, Jones showed up for the forage through the briars neatly dressed, as he was for the first visit, in a dark suit, top hat, and dress shoes with a mirror shine. Reaching the destination along Anderson Road on Test Area 3, Jones opened his trunk, took out his rubber boots, and pulled them on, up over the cuffs of his neatly pressed suit pants. Curry later learned that the minister was known for always appearing in a suit and top hat.

### **The Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church**

Where the church once stood, only the foundation and steps remain. Curry and Jones measured the foundation area, which was 42 ft. by 28 ft. and 3 in. to the outer wall. The foundation was an 8-inch thick concrete wall with river rock fill. The three front steps remain. They are 5 ft. long and 5 in. wide. The church was one room, with an attached vestibule. “People entered through the square vestibule.” The congregation sat on “rough wood” slats “with supports that came in from the side.” The church had a plank floor. McKinley Jones said that the outhouses were behind the church. He pointed out



Real estate map showing Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Map showing landowner names created digitally for the Army by Alexander Archaeological Consultants.

where they had been. The men's outhouse was about 23 feet from the northwest corner. The women's outhouse was about 89 feet from the southeast corner.

Jones remembered when the funeral of the Reverend John Jones (1886-1935), his great uncle, was held in the church, and "so many people were in the church for it that the plank floor fell in." McKinley's wife, Melissa, told him she had been handed out of the window. With a smile, Jones said, "I guess she was about 8 years old. She *claims* to be younger than I am." McKinley Jones said he was young then, "but old enough to be plowing with a mule," which was what he was doing when J.E. Jones "fell dead." "We were on one side of the creek plowing; he was plowing on the other. We heard a noise."

[NOTE: On January 10, 1997, Reverend Jones brought Mr. Albert Robinson (age 83) to meet with Curry. Carolene Wu, RSA Cultural Resource Manager (CRM) was invited to join the "visit." Mr. Robinson (now deceased) had lived in the Union Hill Community and also attended the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Robinson and Jones talked back and forth between themselves about their remembrances of the church and the people, and, as often happens when two people get together, one reminded the other of a person or happening in the past, and then they discussed it. Curry wrote copious notes, interrupting occasionally to ask a question to clarify what was being said or to pose a question when the discussion slowed. The following sections, which discuss the church, congregation, school that was held in the church, the nearby lodge, and the Inman Cemetery to the south of the church, compile the information learned from the visit with Reverend Jones and Mr. Robinson.

Albert Robinson said his family lived on the land of John Grayson (B-51 on the Army Real Estate Map). He said they lived about a quarter mile from the church. His mother was Delphie Robinson. He said he was about 9 or 10 years old when his father, George Robinson, died, which would put the date in the mid-1920's.]

### **The Pastors and Congregation of Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church.**

The parents of Reverend Jones, McKinley Jones (born in 1893) and Mary Lou Lanier Jones (1906) told him that they went to the church as early as 1911. They were married in the church in 1922. Reverend Jones recalls that in the early 1930's, Surrey (spelling?) Mitchell was pastor. "He pastored there until the government took over."

People entered the room through the square vestibule, sat on the wooden slat seats, and Pastor Mitchell stood in the front to preach. He was a man of medium build. "He wasn't a whooping preacher, but he was loud. He was a singing preacher."

Surrey Mitchell had services in the church twice a month. He was also the pastor of another church in Athens. Nevertheless, Sunday school was held every Sunday, led by Jim Holden. He was the Sunday School Superintendent. Sunday School was divided into two groups, "one for little bitty children and one for adults and older children."

Surrey Mitchell received very little pay for his preaching—he received very little money. "People didn't give money. In those days, they gave chickens, turnip greens, eggs, or whatever the garden had." In order to support his family, Mitchell was also a tenant farmer on Rob Camper's farm on old Madison Pike. "On the farm he did whatever there was to be done. He'd be out there making molasses, or if the machinery was broken down, he'd be out there fixing it, and he sang just as much in the field as he did in church."

Mitchell's wife's name was Lena. She dressed very neatly. Mitchell wore suits; they were not expensive ones. He had an old Model T Ford he kept running. "He always had a deep smile" and Lena was always at his side.

Lewis Powell, pastor at Blackburn's Chapel and Old Grove on Slaughter Road preached occasionally at Union Hill. Reverend Jones and Albert Robinson described Powell as being a "very bright [light-skinned] man, and when he got to preaching real hard, he'd turn real red." Cy Fletcher also preached at Union Hill once in a while.

When asked about names of members of the congregation of Union Hill Presbyterian Church, Reverend Jones and Mr. Robinson said, "That's been a long time." The names that came to their mind that day were:

John Fogg	McKinley Jones, Jr.
Jim and Zumma (Zummer) Holding and son Thornton	Ada Toney
Wyatt Hyder and his wife	Alla Lee Glisper
Pansy Lee Jefferson	Ollie Mae Willie
Albert Robinson and wife Octavia	Bill Rice and wife Viola
McKinley Jones, Sr. and wife Mary Lou	Lena Jeffries

[In 2005, Polly White Isaacs told the researcher that she attended "Union Hill Church school and identified herself as a member of the church. She lived by Indian Creek and also described having to walk over a "foot log" to get there.]

Jones and Robinson commented that people played ball behind the church. A man from Pond Beat with whom the researcher talked later in time recalled being invited to picnics that were sometimes held at Union Hill Church and that he would go there from Mullins Flat. What he remembered most about the picnics was eating so much homemade ice cream. [Note: This study has found that the churches were places where community activities were held.]

### **Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church School/Union Hill School**

The existence of a "Union Hill School" building on the arsenal has been asserted by Julie Coco, a current researcher (Alexander et al. 2005). It is Coco's contention that the Union Hill School was not synonymous with the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church. This is not consistent with this researcher's (Curry's) findings. The issue is presented at length below because the former residents of the community state their church/school is being incorrectly depicted.

Coco has provided three pieces of evidence: (1) a photograph held in the Madison County Library, (2) a USGS topographic map dated in the 1930's that has "Union Hill School" labeled on the location, and (3) school records held by the library that indicate they were sent from "Union Hill School" at the time land was taken by the Government.

While Coco's conclusion based on these three pieces of evidence is understandable, this researcher makes the following assertions:

- The photograph is incorrectly labeled.
- The label on the topographic map indicates the location of the structure where the school was held and thus labeled Union Hill School because school was held in the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church.
- School records on file in the library that are shown to have been sent from "Union Hill School" at the time the arsenal closed were sent by the teachers who held school in the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and thus the name "Union Hill School."

In the Madison County Library Heritage Room, a photograph is held which is labeled on the back, "Union Hill School" in the photographer's handwriting, and "on the arsenal" in a different handwriting. Long-time library employee Renee' Pruitt recognized the handwriting of the added words, "on the arsenal," to be that of historian James Record, who wrote on the photograph after it was held by the library. The name "Union Hill" was a place name in other areas of Huntsville/North Alabama. It is asserted here that Mr. Record was in error when he wrote "on the arsenal" on the photograph. This assertion is based on the statements given by those who attended the school and the church.

- McKinley Jones and Albert Robinson went to school held in the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Polly White Isaacs (born 1913) also said she went to school in the church. It is common knowledge among the older people that school was held in the church, and there was no other school in that area for Black children, and the White children had no school in the area.
- The USGS 7.5' Madison quadrangle map of 1936 places the Union Hill School and the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church in the same location.
- Since the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church was the only place in that area where school was being held at the time the Government took over the land, then any school records would have come from the teachers who had classes in the church building.
- The name "Union Hill School" can reasonably be an abbreviated name for the school held at the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church.
- Given the evidence that only one "school" was present in that area, and it was "held" in the church, then the photograph held by the library is incorrectly labeled. The structure in the photograph is not the structure indicated on the church site by either archaeological evidence (obvious above ground feature—a foundation) or by description of former school students.



The photograph held in the library labeled "Union Hill School" shows the structure to have stacked corner stones as the only foundation and what was probably a wooden front step.

The photograph below, taken by Beverly Curry in November of 1996, shows Rev. McKinley Jones standing by the cement steps that were used to enter the square vestibule at the entrance of the church. The cement foundation of the church can be seen in the background. Thus, the photograph of "Union Hill School" is not a photograph of the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Since the former residents contend that the church was synonymous with the school, they are incensed that the photograph of the dilapidated structure built on cornerstones is being presented as Union Hill School on the arsenal.



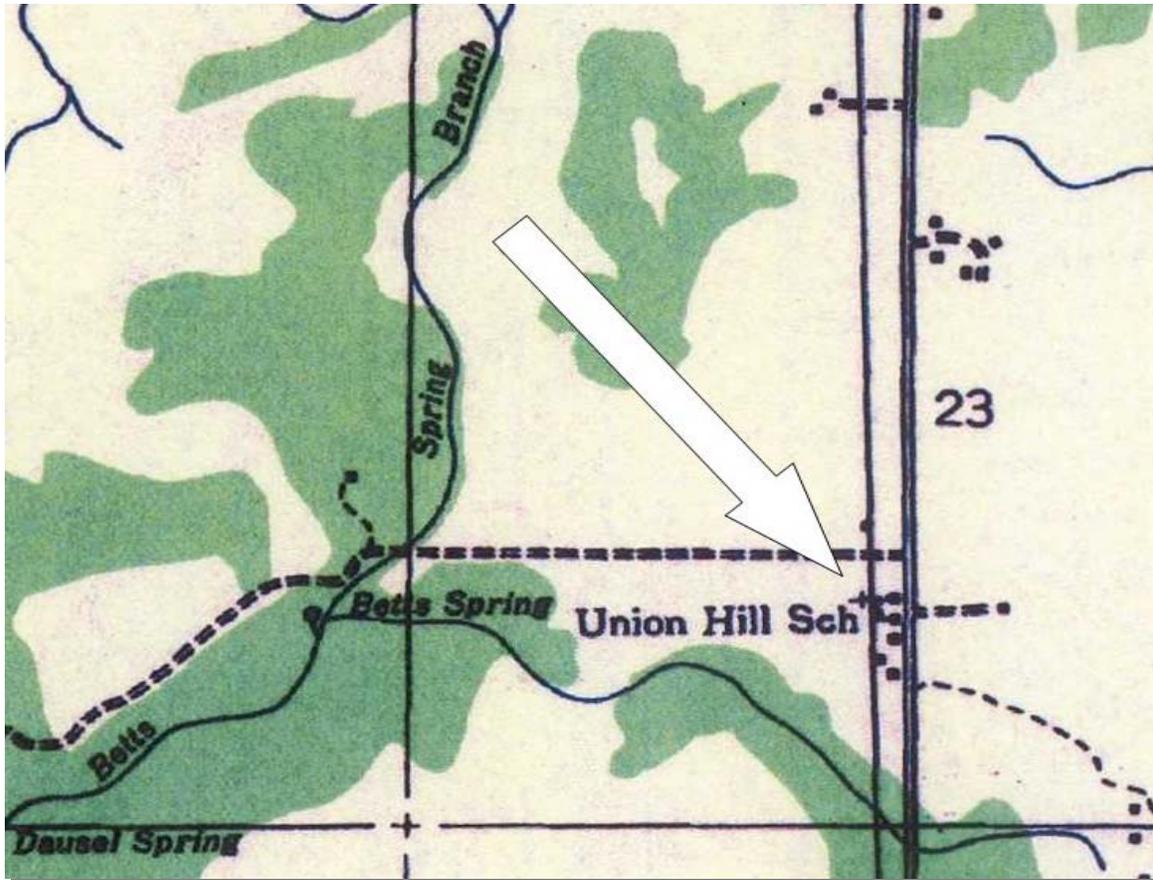
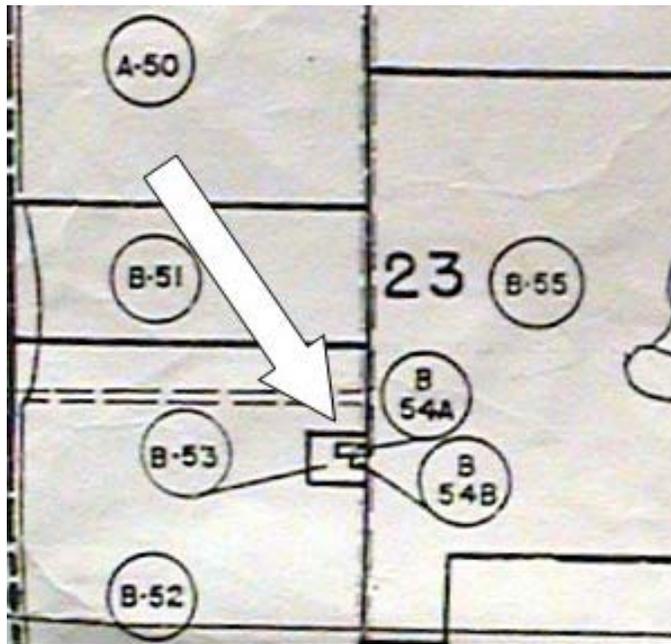


Figure 1 USGS 7.5' Madison, Alabama Quadrangle, 1936. Shows Union Hill School.



US Army Real Estate Map.

Number key for parcel owners:  
 B-52. J.E. Williams  
 B-53. Zumma and James Holding  
 B-54-A. Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church  
 B-54-B. Grand Order United Bros. & Sisters of Honor

NOTE: The Union Hill School label on the USGS map is beside a structure that has a cross symbol on the top, indicating it was a church. The structure next to it was the lodge. The Army Real Estate Map substantiates the oral history, which states that the "Union Hill School" was held in the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

UNION HILL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
3126 NEVEL DRIVE N.W.  
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA 35810  
TELEPHONE 859-2431

REV. MCKINLEY JONES  
RESIDENCE 852-2235

ELDER RICHARD DANIELS, CLERK  
RESIDENCE 859-5340

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

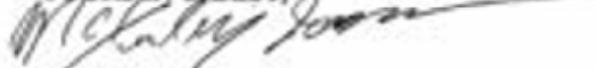
I am McKinley Jones, Pastor of the present Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church. I am writing you in regards to the old Union Hill Church. I can recall as far back as 1911. I can go this far back because of information that I have learned.

In 1922, the pastor was Henry Johnson. He performed the wedding ceremony for my parents. This Church served as a Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the school for the surrounding area. The only grade school that I have attended was in this Church. We lived approximately three miles across Indian Creek from the Church. We had to walk to school. We had no means of transportation. There was a bridge across this creek. The only way to cross was on a foot log. If it began to rain real heavy, all of the students on the opposite side of the creek, would have to go home before the creek would rise.

We had one teacher, Mrs Lucy Humphrey, teaching from first thru ninth grade. In 1937, the work load was so heavy that she was given another teacher to help her. Her name was Mrs. Patton. We attended Sunday School and Church services on Sunday and attended school there during the week.

In 1941, the Government acquired all of the property in that area and the Churches were moved out. Union Hill's congregation split. Some of the member went to St. Elizabeth in Madison and other members that lived in the Huntsville area in 1947, organized the present Union Hill, located on Nevels Drive, where I am Pastor now.

YOURS IN CHRIST,



Rev. McKinley Jones, Pastor

**School Held in the Church.** McKinley Jones and Albert Robinson said Black children went to school mostly in the winter when they didn't have to work in the field, "maybe two or three months a year. In September and October there was the cotton. In November the corn. In February we started to plant. The girls went to school more."

McKinley Jones said there were two teachers—Lucy Humphrey and then Miss Patton, who was added in 1937. Jones said Lucy Humphrey was "the main one". "We had to sit there—we *were supposed* to study." When asked if they were disciplined, McKinley Jones said, "You better know that's right!" He said the teacher had long switches. She made the bigger boys go get the kind she liked.

There were no desktops for the children to write on. The children sat on the slats of the pews and held whatever they used on their laps. The teachers taught lessons to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. McKinley Jones said he lived on the far side of the creek from the church, so when the creek got too high, he couldn't go back to school until it went down.

McKinley Jones said his mother sent sandwiches to school with him for lunch, made from whatever they had. Jones and Robinson agreed that the children brought from home "whatever they had."

### **The Store and the Lodge**

Also on the property of Jim Holding (B-52), immediately west of Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church, was a two-story structure that was Jim Holding's store. Jim Holding's home was nearby, "down the hill" from the church. The store/lodge was built like the church, but straight up."

The children bought cookies and candy there. Albert Robinson said that when he went to church, his mother gave him "a little bit of money" to take to put in the offering. He said, "Afterward, my mother would talk to the storekeeper, Mr. Jimmy Holding, and check up to see if I had spent any of the money at the store instead of putting it in the offering."

Meetings in the lodge were held upstairs. Children were never allowed upstairs. The inscription on the grave monument of Henderson Holding that is in Inman Cemetery refers to this lodge (Supreme Royal Circle of the Friends of the World). The fathers of McKinley Jones and Albert Robinson were members of this lodge. They said they had been young and hadn't gone to lodge meetings, and it was "kind of a secret—they wouldn't tell us anything." When asked if he meant like the Masons, who are sworn to secrecy about some parts of their organization, Jones responded positively.

What Jones and Robinson did know was that if a member of the lodge were ill, the others would take turns sitting with that person. The needy were helped. Money was collected, and when a member died, some of the money was sent to the family of the deceased, an endowment, to help pay for the funeral. Both men said their fathers and others referred to the lodge as "Sisters and Brothers of Arnold." Both informants agreed this implied that

women were members, but they knew women never went to the men's meetings. The men went to meetings once a month. They did not know about meetings or activities the women may have had.

McKinley Jones recalls that the lodge went down before the land was taken over by the government. He remembers that his father went out and bought burial insurance then. He said the last member of the lodge had been buried recently (date of comment was Feb 1997). His name was Isom Collier. Jones and Robinson concurred that only one such lodge remains today. It is in Madison on Maple Street. The name given of a possible contact person was Josie Jefferson.



The lodge emblem shown on Henderson Holding's cemetery marker, Inman Cemetery. Photograph by John Rankin, 2003.

### **Ownership of the Land**

**At the Time of Sale to the Government.** McKinley Jones and Albert Robinson said Jim Holding (they pronounced the name Holdin) had owned the ground where the store was located. This was Parcel B-53 on the Army Real Estate Map. At an earlier point in the conversation, Robinson had referred to Henderson Holding as being the storeowner. This was probably because the store was “in the family.” James Holding (born February 1887) was the son of Henderson and Cassie Holding (Madison County Census of 1900), and he inherited the land from his father. The only other James Holding shown in the 1900 Census was shown in the household of Levi Holding (born in 1845) and his wife

Maria (born in 1869). They had living with them their grandson James Holding, born in 1890. Deed research (Alexander et al. 2005) shows that James Holding and his wife Zumma Holding had the land mortgaged to them from Jason Slaughter and his wife Delphia in 1927. The land was shown as belonging to James and Zumma in 1942. They did not sell the land to the Army. It was acquired by the U.S. Government by a Deed of Taking on June 12, 1942,

**Early Ownership of the Land.** The entire history of land ownership will not be presented; however, land ownership in the 1840s is relevant to the discussions in this section. First, the association of the name Inman with the land is documented. Second, the prominence of the name Holding is shown.

As is discussed in the following section entitled the “Inman/Emiline Cemetery,” the cemetery south of the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church was named Emiline Cemetery by the Army. Since the cemetery was called Inman Cemetery by the local people, the researcher sought to determine the appropriate name. The early land ownership placed the name Inman in this area. It was found that William Robertson, who was the administrator for the estate of Issac Inman, sold the land to Richard Holding in 1844. John Rankin noted there was an error in recording the deed, as the administrator’s name was written as “Robinson.” Further research could clarify the history of land ownership and the Inman association. Family genealogy suggests the Inman family lived in this area and established a cemetery.

Deed research (AAC 2005) shows that Richard Holding owned property in the area that would become RSA as early as 1838: (160 acres) in T4S, R2W, Section 14 (the SW ¼) and 160 acres in the NE ¼ of that Section. He obtained the NE ¼ of Section 14 in 1840, 169.04 acres in the SE ¼ in 1843. In 1844 Richard Holding acquired the NW and SW ¼’s and NW part of the NE ¼ of Section 26. In 1844 Richard Holding obtained the SE ¼ of the SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 26 from William H. Robertson.

In 1855, Richard Holding sold land in the northeast quarter of Section ¼ of Section 14 as well as land held in Sections 11, 12, 15, 22, 23, and 26 to his son, William M. Holding. Later transactions show that the rest of Richard Holding’s land was either sold or passed his son, William M. Holding, or passed to other family members (sister, nephew, grandson) when his will was probated in January of 1900.

Richard Holding’s main plantation was where the international airport is now located. John Rankin asserts Holding was apparently very wealthy, judging from the size of his tombstone. His family tombstones were moved from the airport location to the old city cemetery in the town of Madison in 1984 when the airport was being constructed.

Richard Holding and his descendants are shown to have been prominent landowners of land that would become the arsenal as well as a large amount of acreage beyond its boundaries.



Holding family markers moved to old section Madison City Cem in 1984  
Photograph by John P. Rankin.

**Land Ownership at the Time of Sale to the Government.** At the time the Government took the land, in particular parcel B-52, it was owned by James Holding. The Madison County census records of 1900 list a number of people with the name Holding who lived in this northwest area of what is now the arsenal. The fact that they are enumerated on the same census page indicates they were neighbors. These Holdings were classified as Black. Males born prior to 1860 who were shown as heads of household were Henderson Holding (born in 1851), Levi Holding (born in 1845), and Richard Holding (born in 1855). A sister-in-law (born in 1840) lived there. Mahalia Holding (born in 1840) was listed as a head of household. The census shows the many children and grandchildren of these people.

Based on the prominence of the land holdings and plantation background of the Holding plantation landowners during the period when slavery was present, it is reasonable to suggest that the many Black people named Holding who lived in the area in 1900 and at the time the Government acquired the land were descendants of slaves from the Holding plantation.

### **The Inman Cemetery (shown on earlier arsenal maps as Emiline Cemetery)**

**The Cemetery Name.** In 1997 the cemetery south of Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church was shown as Emiline Cemetery on Army maps. The researcher realized that this was the same cemetery McKinley Jones and Albert Robinson called Inman Cemetery. She discussed this with John Rankin and asked if he would focus some of his research time on historic records that would shed light on this area.

Rankin's research did not find the surname "Emiline" to be representative of any early settlers of the land in this area. However, the name "Inman" is found in the early land records and census records of the county. In 1830, John B. (or "R.") Inman with a wife and daughter was enumerated in the New Hope area. Some of the probate records for John R. Inman of that area, who died in 1837, are presented in Rankin's (2005) and documentary report of RSA cemeteries. The 1937 Madison County estate file for John Inman indicates an association between him and Theophilus Lacey and Pleasant S. Austin, who are known pioneer owners of arsenal lands.

John Rankin sought further information about the Inman family from the following Website: Website Sutton's Place, contact person [rsutton22@msn.com](mailto:rsutton22@msn.com). The website yielded the following information.

1. John Richie Inman was born 5 July 1788 in Dandridge, Jefferson County, Tennessee, and died 5 March 1837 in Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama. He was buried in Inman Cemetery, Possom Hollow, Madison County, Alabama. He was the son of (2.) Abednego Inman and (3.) Mary Richie. He married Jane Patterson Walker 22 July 1807 in Jefferson County, Tennessee. She was born 17 March 1791 in Greene County, Tennessee and died 1832 in Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama. She was buried in Inman Cemetery, Possom Hollow, Madison County, Alabama.
2. Abednego Inman was born 1 June 1752 in York, England and died 2 February in Dandridge, Jefferson County, Tennessee. He was the son of Ezekiel Inman (born in 1730) and Hannah Hardin.
3. Mary Richie was born 16 November 1757 in Prince Edward County, Virginia, and died 23 June 1836 in Dandridge, Jefferson County, Tennessee. She was the daughter of John Richie and Jane Davis.

Further names can be found at the web site given above.

The *Historical Atlas of Alabama* (Department of Geography, University of Alabama 2000) shows only one Inman Cemetery in Madison County; it is listed as being in Section 26 of Township 4, Range 2 West, exactly where the “Emiline”/Inman Cemetery is found. This indicates that the correct name for the cemetery is Inman.

Rosita Sutton’s family records indicate the area where the cemetery is located was called Possom Hollow as early as the 1830s. In 1840 Lazarus and Green L. Inman were enumerated among pioneers known to have lived in the southwestern part of the county. (The cemetery is also in the southwestern part of the county.)

NAMES OF HEADS OF FAMILIES.	FREE WHITE PERSONS, INCLUDING HEADS OF FAMILIES.																					
	MALES										FEMALES											
	Under 5	5 to 10	10 to 15	15 to 20	20 to 30	30 to 40	40 to 50	50 to 60	60 to 70	70 to 80	80 to 90	90 to 100	100 and upward	Under 5	5 to 10	10 to 15	15 to 20	20 to 30	30 to 40	40 to 50	50 to 60	60 to 70
<i>Bingo Inman</i>	152	110	77	49	158	87	53	33	12	4	1		141	124	77	55	115	80	60	23	11	
<i>Lazarus Inman</i>			1																			
<i>Green L. Inman</i>					1												1					
<i>Catharine Belle</i>			1															1				
<i>John B. Braggins</i>			1	1															1			
<i>William Price</i>				1	1			1												1		
<i>William Naley</i>	1					1								1					1			
<i>Barney H. Neal</i>						1																
<i>John B. Horton</i>		1					1									3	1		1			
<i>Mary Costwright</i>																1				1		
<i>William Sanford</i>	2				1		1								2			1	1			
<i>Saml. J. Jones</i>				1																		
<i>William Morr</i>	2					1													1			
<i>James Dimes</i>	1				1									2					1			1
<i>James Williams</i>	1		2					1														1
<i>Harris Jones</i>			1				1							1		1	1		1			
<i>Isaac Rogers</i>		1	1																			1
<i>S. G. Ferguson</i>	1	2					1							1					1			

1840 Madison County Census, p. 157, showing Lazarus and Green L. Inman

Rankin noted that the 1840 neighbors of Green and Lazarus Inman are people generally known to be pioneers of arseal lands and the area immediately to the northwest of the arsenal, which became the town of Madison. While they were shown on page 157 of the 1840 census, page 160 includes listings for both Isaac Inman and James Inman. Isaac is shown in the 50–60 age bracket while James is listed in the 20–30, suggesting a father and son relationship, which is supported by records showing they lived on adjacent parcels.

John Rankin stated:

Again, all of the neighbors of Isaac and James Inman are known early pioneers of arsenal and Madison area lands. Isaac Inman was listed as having two slaves in (Madison County Alabama 1840 Census, p. 160). None of the other Inman families were shown as owning slaves. Isaac had only what was termed “household slaves”, as they were both females, of an age that indicated a woman and her daughter. No other census year showed slaves in the Inman household, so they may have been freed or sold, as they don’t appear in the estate papers after Isaac passed away in 1840. Additionally, there were no RSA families in Madison County with the surname Inman in later years after the Civil War, so there were apparently none that were freed from Inman ownership at that time. This would account for the lack of the name Inman in the Black population on the arsenal land. In addition, it would indicate that the Inman Cemetery, a burying ground for White people in the 1800s, later was used by the local Black population, as was often the case.

An excerpt (page 160) from the Madison County 1840 census is presented on the following page. It shows slave holdings of James Inman and Isaac Inman. Following this, a page is presented from the Madison County Estate File. It shows Isaac Inman’s heirs and notes that no slaves were held. In his research notes (as compiled in 2002), John Rankin further commented on information found in the Inman papers:

These papers not only list the heirs of Isaac as including his widow Martha and sons James H. and Green L. Inman, but they likewise show the people who purchased items at the estate sale (typically nearby neighbors). Among those purchasers at the sale of the “perishable property” were many known pioneers of arsenal lands, including especially Edward Frost. Genealogical research led to the discovery that Isaac’s widow Martha was a daughter of Edward Frost, who is known to have lived at or very near to the cemetery site. All of this points to a burial of at least Isaac Inman in the Inman Cemetery, since most pioneers were buried on their own land, and there was no listing for Isaac Inman (or any other Inman of this generation) in the old Maple Hill Cemetery records in Huntsville.

The page showing the estate items of Isaac Inman, the names of the people who purchased them, and the prices paid for the items has been reproduced and is shown on page 48.

by the Marshal of the *Madison County* District

Color	SLAVES										NUMBER OF PERSONS IN EACH FAMILY EMPLOYED IN							PER ON	
	MALES					FEMALES					TOTAL		1	2	3	4	5		6
	under 10	10 under 20	20 under 30	30 under 40	40 and up	under 10	10 under 20	20 under 30	30 under 40	40 and up	1000	5000							
518	541	359	198	60		568	487	324	137	41		5224	1073	15	107		5	22	
	2											4							
4	5	4	1	1		4	3		4	1		30	16						
4	8	4	2	1		4	6	4	2	1		42	28						
												2	1						
												6	1						
												3						1	
												8	1						
												7	3						
		7		1		1	1	3				22	9						
4	3	3					3		2	1		34	12						
3	3	3				2	4	3				23	19						
												4	1						
8	8	7	5	3		11	6	6	5	3		71	45						
3				1		2	1		2			16	6						
1	1			1		3	2			1		16	5						
7	3	6		3		2		3		1		33	15						
												6	1						
												9	1						
15	25	8	3	5		9	9	11	5	3		97	60						
												2	1						
1				1			1		1			12	2		2				
1	1					2	1	1				11	4					1	
												6	1						
2	1	2				1	2		1			18	6						
												9	1		1				
												3			1				
												8	1						
5	2	2	1	2		1	3	3	2			30	13						
												3	1						
						1	1					6	2						
												8	2						
76	603	408	210	79		611	530	357	181	53		5768	290	70	111	33	5	24	
11	62	46	12	19		43	43	33	24	11		536	252	4	4	4	2		

Isaac Inman  
James Inman

Madison County Census, 1860, p. 140.

MADISON COUNTY, AL ESTATE CASE FILE *INMAN, ISAAC*

DATE: *1840* CASE NO.: *415*

<b>HEIRS</b>	<i>INMAN, MARTH</i>	<i>WIDOW</i>
	<i>INMAN, GREEN L</i>	<i>SON</i>
	<i>INMAN, JAMES H.</i>	<i>SON</i>
	<i>MITCHELL, SALLY</i>	<i>DAUGHTER</i>
	<i>FULLER, LUCINDA</i>	<i>DAUGHTER</i>

Packet contains 50 - 100 papers dealing with estate settlement.  
A will is mentioned, but not found in this packet.  
( It should be in the Madison County Will Book.)

**SLAVES**

**(No Slaves)**

Before me Richard B. Purdon Clerk  
of the County of Madison & County  
and State of Alabama William B. Robert  
our Adm of Isaac Inman's and  
wrote with that the witness is a  
true return of the Sac of the said  
estate made by him

13 Feb 1841  
Witnessed  
2<sup>d</sup> Feb 9 1841

Richard B. Purdon Clerk

...pe Sale per prop  
belonging to Estate of  
Isaac Inman deceased,  
ordered to be recorded.  
A. M. W. & page 225.  
13<sup>th</sup> Feby 1841

Recorded by  
M. C. Phaw's Record Book  
No 9 Page 225

Inventory of the Perishable property  
belonging to the Estate of Isaac Inman  
deceased sold by his admr is as follows

Lewis Hemell	One cart	\$ 5.50
Edward Frost	One Plow horse	1.00
W. Vallent	pr Strutchers	.25
Wm M Donaldson	1 Lot Lumber	5.40
do do	lot old Irons	.25
James Young	1 Iron Wedge	.37 1/2
E. Frost	1 Broad Axe	1.00
R. Spagins	Carry Plow	.25
Wm Donaldson	Blue Shure	1.25
Josh Donaway	do do	.37 1/2
H. Crows	1 Shovel	.75
Canon W. Haladay	1 Side Rate	.75
James Mitchell	1 Cross cut Saw	2.00
Samuel White	1 Log Chain	2.75
Martha Inman Wid	Lot of Plows and gear	2.00
Lazarus Inman	1 pair plow Gear	1.00
Samuel White	1 pair plow Gear	1.31 1/4
Green S. Inman	Mature	.75
do do	1 plow and Singtree	2.00 1/2
W. H. Robertson	1 Bee Gum	.25
G. S. Inman	1 Bee Gum	.50
A. Fletcher	1 Bee Gum	.50

John Rankin suggests that if the Inman Cemetery located on Test Area 3 is, in fact, the Inman Cemetery that was in the area called Possom Hollow in the 1830s and 1840s, then the first people buried there were the early White settlers of Madison County, John Richie Inman (July 5, 1788–March 5, 1837) and his wife Jane Patterson Walker Inman (March 17, 1791–1822), which is significant.

If this is true, this is another instance of what was once considered a “white” cemetery later being classified as a “Black” cemetery. In the first compiled research of cemeteries in Madison County (*Cemeteries of Madison County, Alabama, Vol. 1*), Dorothy Johnson (1971) mentioned Emiline Cemetery and classified it as a “Black” cemetery, which was probably based on the inscriptions on the tombstones. Johnson did not include Black cemeteries when she documented tombstone inscriptions.

**Request that the Army Change Name of Cemetery from Emiline Cemetery to Inman Cemetery.** McKinley Jones, Albert Robinson, and Polly White Isaacs said the name of the cemetery listed as Emiline Cemetery was Inman Cemetery. No indication was found as to why the cemetery should be named Emiline. The name Inman Cemetery is supported by both local knowledge and the deed and records research conducted by John P. Rankin. In 2005, the researcher recommended a name change for the cemetery to the RSA Cultural Resources Manager (CRM). The CRM submitted a name change for the cemetery to the RSA Directorate of Public Works in February of 2006.

**Names of People Interred in Inman Cemetery.** People McKinley Jones and Albert Robinson recalled being buried in Inman Cemetery and their comments about them:

**G.R. BLACKBURN.**

**CY FLETCHER.** He was a preacher. He preached at Union Hill Church once in a while.

**DAN GIDDIN, HENRY GIDDIN, and TOM GIDDIN** [Spelled by pronunciation. Could be Gideon.]

**HENDERSON HOLDING** (Albert Robinson helped to bury him, 1930), **ZUMMA HOLDING, AND JIM HOLDING.**

**JAMES JEFFERSON** (who was called **JIMMY GRANT**) and his wife **LENA**. They had twin daughters, Leona and Iona. Jimmy was a preacher who “preached around.” He lived about a mile northeast of Union Hill C.P. Church, but neither Jones nor Robinson could remember that he ever preached there.

**REVEREND J. E. (JOHNNY) JONES.** Both head and footstone are present. McKinley Jones said Johnny Jones was his great uncle. J.E. Jones is shown in the Madison County census in 1920 as a head of household, occupation “Operator, Farmer” and living with his wife, Lillian Jones, who was 42 years of age at that time. Lillian was born in Alabama; her parents were born in Tennessee.

**GEORGE ROBINSON.** He had a tin funeral home marker, but it is gone now.

**ADA TONEY.** Her husband Tom was not buried here. They had daughters, Elise and Laura.

[Polly White Isaacs added her mother’ name, **FANNIE MORRIS WHITE**, and her father’s sister, **MARY ELLEN JORDAN**. Her mother died in 1939, the day her father’s sister was buried.]



The marker of Reverend J.E. (Johnny) Jones, Inman Cemetery. Photograph by John P. Rankin.

TWELFTH CENSUS O

State Alabama  
 County Madison

SCHEDULE No.

Township or other division of county Madison Precinct No. 8

Name of incorporated city, town, or village, within the above-named division, X

Enumerated by me on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of June, 19

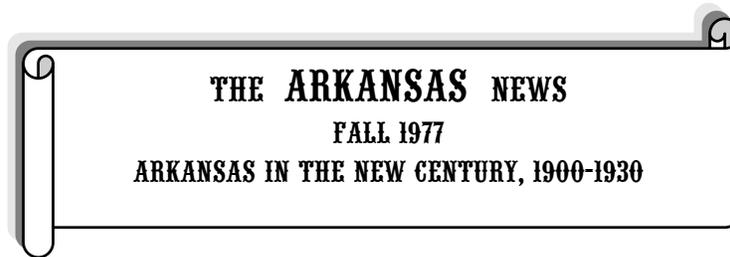
IN CITY.	LOCATION.		NAME of each person whose place of abode on June 1, 1900, was in this family. <small>Enter surname first, then the given name and middle initial, if any. Enter every person living on June 1, 1900. Omit children born since June 1, 1900.</small>	RELATION.  Relationship of each person to the head of the family.	Color or race.	DATE OF BIRTH.		Age at last birthday.	Whether deaf, dumb, insane, idiotic, blind, or crippled.	Number of years married.	Number of live many.	Number of children born.	Place of birth of Person.	
	House Number.	Block or lot.				Month.	Year.							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
	279-279 277-277		Latimer James <sup>24</sup> L	Head	W	M	Nov	1872	27	5			Alaba	
			Martha	Wife	W	F	July	1845	54		6	5	Alaba	
	280-280 277-277		Blackburn Leatriz <sup>23</sup> B	Head	B	M	Oct	1842	57				Alaba	
			Smith Mary J	Boarder	B	F	Jan	1863	37		5	2	Alaba	
			Latimer	Boarder	B	M	Oct	1867	32				Alaba	
	250-251 279-279		Golley Gray <sup>29</sup> G	Head	B	M	Jan	1854	46		13		Alaba	
			Paralee	Wife	B	F	Feb	1869	31		13	8	5	Alaba
			Mary L	Daughter	B	F	June	1852	47				Alaba	
			Gray	Son	B	M	Jan	1855	45				Alaba	
			Mattie L	Daughter	B	F	May	1872	27				Alaba	
			Nathanial	Son	B	M	Feb	1878	22				Alaba	
			Lally M	Daughter	B	F	Feb	1800	72				Alaba	
	280-280 280-280		Jenny Edmund <sup>24</sup> J	Head	B	M	May	1850	50		25		Alaba	
			Mattie	Wife	B	F	May	1854	46		25	2	2	Alaba
			Walter Beckham	Grandson	B	M	Mar	1858	42				Alaba	
			Robert	Grandson	B	M	July	1877	22				Alaba	
			Mattie	Granddaughter	B	F	July	1899	1				Alaba	
	281-281 281-281		Smith Lewis <sup>26</sup> S	Head	B	M	Mar	1820	80		18	0	0	Alaba
			Laughton Jason <sup>24</sup> L	Head	B	M	Apr	1820	80		15		Alaba	
			Army	Wife	B	F	Apr	1820	80		15	2	2	Alaba
			Joshua	Son	B	M	Apr	1877	23				Mississippi	
			William	Son	B	M	May	1850	50				Alaba	
	283-283 283-283		Wiggins Annie <sup>24</sup> W	Boarder	B	F	Nov	1891	8				Alaba	
			Holding Henderson	Head	B	M	Oct	1851	48		13		Alaba	
			Cassie	Wife	B	F	Nov	1852	47		13	13	5	Alaba
			James	Son	B	M	Feb	1887	13				Alaba	
			Busch	Daughter	B	F	Mar	1889	11				Alaba	
			Thomas	Son	B	M	Oct	1891	8				Alaba	
			Malinda	Granddaughter	B	F	Apr	1870	30				Alaba	
	284-284 284-284		Lilly William <sup>24</sup> L	Head	B	M	Apr	1878	22		2		Alaba	
			Mimia	Wife	B	F	Jan	1870	30		2	1	0	Alaba
	285-285 285-285		Giffusion Edward <sup>24</sup> G	Head	B	M	Feb	1870	30		6		Alaba	
			Martha A	Wife	B	F	Mar	1878	22		6	0	0	Alaba
					B	M	Jan	1845	55				Alaba	

Madison County Census, 1920.



Emiline/Inman Cemetery. Photograph by John Rankin, March 11, 2003.

The researcher asked a number of people about the “Royal Circle of Friendship” symbol that is on Henderson Holdings’ Monument. Lloyd C. Lanphere of Madison, Alabama provided a copy of an article from *The Arkansas News*. It is typed in its entirety below:



**Article Title: “Arkansas Creates African-American Organization”**

Helena – The years between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and the beginning of the Great War in 1914 became a time of great advancements as well as setbacks for African Americans in the Arkansas Delta. From slavery to emancipation to citizenship, some would emerge in this period as politicians, ministers, educators, and business owners.

W.E.B. DuBois, scholar and founder of the NAACP, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, believed this educated group, the “Talented Tenth,” could save American blacks, both culturally and economically.

One member of this group from the Delta was Richard A. Williams, physician and founder and Supreme President of the Royal Circle of Friends of the World.

Dr. Williams was born in Forrest City on September 13, 1874. He completed his course work in the public school by the age of 12. At the age of 19, Williams entered Walden University-Meheny Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. The college was one of five predominantly black medical schools in the country. It was associated with the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Williams received his medical degree in 1902 and three years later, he and his wife moved to Helena, Arkansas, where he set up his medical

practice. Helena then had a population of 5,550 – 3,400 of whom were black. Six African American physicians and surgeons practiced there.

In September of 1909, Williams founded the Royal Circle of Friends of the World. The fraternity’s primary goal was to promote the moral, physical, intellectual, and material welfare of its members.

By 1911, the organization had grown to a membership of more than 9,000, with 300 lodges in rural communities in Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

The success of the Royal Circle was partly due to blacks’ mistrust of government and white owned banks. The Royal Circle of Friends offered great returns for small investments, with the support of friends, neighbors, churches, and respected black business leaders.

The fee for joining the Royal Circle, including a medical examination, was \$2.50. Members then paid \$1 per quarter, which paid \$300 to the beneficiary after the member’s death.

For years to come, in rural black cemeteries loyalty to the Royal Circle of Friends was indicated by the distinctive headstones that displayed the organization’s symbol of the majestic lion and letters RCF.

Civil War soldiers are definitely of historic interest. The researcher asked John Rankin to help her delve into the identity of G.R. Blackburn. John perused the census records and also consulted Brian Hogan of Huntsville. Brian is a member of the Sons of Union Veterans organization, and he helps to assure that Union soldiers are commemorated in the area. He is quite knowledgeable about matters of the Civil War.

The results of the research took us from looking at a marker over a century old and surmising about it to being introduced, through historic records, to the Blackburn family in the community.



Photograph by John P. Rankin, March 2003.

The grave marker of Corporal G.R. Blackburn in Inman Cemetery is typical of the markers provided for military graves by the U.S. Veteran's Administration when a marker is requested by the family. The military listings of Black soldiers of the Civil War showed that the designation "U. S. C. I." was used to denote "United States Colored Infantry." Given that it was a marker for Civil War service, the census records of Madison County were checked for 1870 and 1880.

On July 12, 2002, John Rankin found an apparent match in the 1880 census. The Blackburn census information is presented below. The original historic document showing Gabriel Blackburn is presented on the following page.

**Shown in Madison County Census of 1880**

Census Place: Township 2, Madison County, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021, National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 46D and 101C

**HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD: PETER BLACKBURN, BLACK, MARRIED, AGE 48**

Wife: Fannie Blackburn, Black, Age 33

Son: Shelby Blackburn, Black, Age 1

Son: Peter Blackburn, Black, Age 12

**HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD: GABRIEL BLACKBURN, BLACK, MALE, AGE 32**

Wife: Elvira Blackburn, Black, Age 27

Dau: Mary Ann Blackburn, Black, Age 8

Dau: Alberta Blackburn, Mulatto, Age 4

Son: Ephram Blackburn, Black, Age 3

Son: Hardy Blackburn, Mulatto, Age 3

No. 24  
 Enumerator's Dist. No. 1  
 Enumeration Dist. No. 304

Note A.—The Census Year begins June 1, 1870, and ends May 31, 1880.  
 Note B.—All persons will be included in the Enumeration who were living on the 1st day of June, 1880. No others will. Children BORN SINCE June 1, 1880, will be OMITTED. Members of Families who have DIED SINCE June 1, 1880, will be INCLUDED.  
 Note C.—Questions Nos. 13, 14, 22 and 23 are not to be asked in respect to persons under 10 years of age.

SCHEDULE I.—Inhabitants in S. S. R. 1. W., in the County of Madison, State of Ala.  
 enumerated by me on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of June, 1880.

*John M. C. Alley*

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Color	Married	Profession, Occupation or Trade	Birth		Place of Birth		
							Place	Month	Year	Month	Year
15	Andrew	M	38	B	1	Farmer			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Jessie	F	24	B	1	Wife			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Maguire	M	16	B		Son			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Stella	F	4	B		Daughter			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Laura	F	2	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Mary	F	2	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
16	Brandon	M	69	B	1	Farming			Ala.	Virginia	Virginia
	Charlotte	F	48	B	1	Housekeeper			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Marj	F	16	B		Housemaid			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
17	Stephen	M	65	B	1	Blacksmith			Ala.	Virginia	Virginia
	Liza	F	49	B	1	Housekeeper			Ala.	Virginia	Virginia
	Lucy	F	21	B		Housemaid			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Anthony	M	18	B		Housemaid			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Bella	F	14	B		Daughter			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Vincent	M	13	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Sammy	M	12	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	John	M	10	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Matilda	F	4	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Stephen	M	3	B		Son			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	John	M	2	B		Son			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Tom	M	2	B		Grandson			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
18	Sandy	M	45	B	1	Farmer			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Jane	F	46	B	1	Housekeeper			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Robert	M	19	B	1	Housemaid			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Keaga	F	14	B		Daughter			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
19	James	M	38	B	1	Farmer			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Ross	M	28	B	1	Housekeeper			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	William	M	7	B		Son			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Emiline	F	4	B		Daughter			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Elvira	F	2	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Sophie	F	2	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Elvira	F	2	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
20	Willie	M	24	B	1	Farmer			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Hannah	F	22	B	1	Housekeeper			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Joe	M	12	B		Son			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
21	Blackburn	M	32	B	1	Farmer			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Elvira	F	27	B	1	Housekeeper			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Mary Ann	F	8	B		Daughter			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Abner	M	4	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Ephraim	M	3	B		Son			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	Andy	M	2	B		"			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
22	Jesse	M	35	B	1	Farmer			Ala.	Ala.	Ala.

John Rankin found two "G." Blackburns in the 1880 census. Rankin asserted that the "G." in the soldier's name was for Gabriel. This was based on the fact that the names of people who the census records showed living near Gabriel Blackburn could be recognized as family names of people who lived in the area that is now the arsenal.

In an e-mail written July 21, 2002, Brian Hogan concurred with this finding. He also stated:

The soldier is Corp. Gabriel R. Blackburn, Co. B, 14th Regiment, U.S.C. infantry. He applied for an Invalid Pension on June 10, 1887 and was granted same. Certificate # 1021428.  
His name appears on the African-American Memorial, Plaque # B-31

The inscription on the tombstone opens the door to discovery of extensive information about the duties and the postings of the 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the U. S. C. I. during the Civil War. This information can be reviewed in the "Official Records of the War of the Rebellion", in many volumes. It tells of where the unit was stationed at various times, what duties were performed, engagements undertaken, recruiting, and disbanding. Individual service records for the soldiers are also available for a fee from the government archives.

Gabriel Blackburn's own words were recorded in Thomas Henry Kenny's *Slave Genealogy*: Gabriel Blackburn was recorded on September 14, 1868 as saying:

I was born in Madison County, Alabama and I am 20 years old. My father is Anthony Blackburn and my mother is Ann Blackburn. I have two sisters: Minerva and Ellen. Ellen is married to Levi Talley and has two children. During the War I served with Company B of the 14th Regiment. I work as a farmer and live on the Lipscomb plantation.

In his records search, John Rankin found that Gabriel Blackburn had been a depositor in the Freedman's Savings and Trust Co. in Huntsville (Source: Fred Charles Rathburn, *Names from Huntsville, AL* (HPL Call # H976.197 v.1, v.2). He also found that Gabriel R. Blackburn filed for an Invalid Pension on June 10, 1887 and was awarded the same (Certificate No. 1021428). No application was made for a widow's or minor's stipend.

Rankin found Gabriel Blackburn listed in the Madison County census of 1900. By then he was shown to be living as a divorced man with a Mary J. Smith (also divorced), who was several years younger than he or his first wife, Elvira, with whom he was listed as living in the 1880 census. Mary Smith was shown as the mother of five children, of whom only two were still living at the time of the 1900 census. One of her children is enumerated in the household headed by Gabriel Blackburn.

## **The Family of the Reverend McKinley Jones**

McKinley Jones was born in 1923. He is the son of McKinley Jones (birth date 1893) and Mary Lou Lanier Jones (birth date 1906). McKinley Jones stated that his great grandfather, Ben Lanier, was bought at the slave market in Mobile, Alabama and brought to Madison County by the Laniers to work on their plantation. A map drawn in 1875 shows thwhoe Laniers owning an extensive amount of land on what is now Redstone Arsenal as well as other areas of Madison County. Further information on the family of the Laniers (White) can be found in Madison, Alabama's sesquicentennial book written by John Rankin (*Memories of Madison: A Connected Community, 1857-2007*, The Donning Co., Virginia Beach, VA, 2007).

To supplement the oral history passed down to him about his Lanier ancestors, McKinley Jones researched the Laniers (White) who had purchased his great grandfather. Jones looked to census information and perused wills and other archival records of the Lanier family. In doing this, he located a list of Lanier slaves, and from it learned the names of his great grandfather's siblings. The records indicated his great grandfather, Ben Lanier, was born in 1840 and had married a woman named Edna (born in 1851), who was a house slave of the Laniers. The brothers of Ben were Davey (Crockett), Jerry Lanier, and Robert Lanier.

McKinley Jones visited the office of Mr. Pete Lanier, who was a well-known, elderly Huntsville attorney. Pete Lanier's grandfather had also been a prominent attorney in Huntsville. He was admitted to the Bar in Alabama in 1899 and served terms as City Attorney, City Commissioner, and Mayor of Huntsville. Jones said Pete Lanier (now deceased) seemed reluctant (perhaps felt awkward) in discussing this part of his family history.

Milton Lanier, Sr. was born in 1878, the third son of Burwell Lanier, who was the son of Isaac Lanier, an early settler of Huntsville. The Laniers began holding land in the area of Madison and the area that is now Redstone Arsenal as early as 1836. They owned many slaves. The Lanier family not only represents the earliest settlers of the land but also figures substantially in shaping the population of the land. The slaves who were owned by the Laniers took the Lanier name when they were freed. The name is well represented in the Black population of Madison County and elsewhere in Alabama today.

In 2005, the researcher contacted the daughter of John Lanier, who lives in the historic home in Madison that was passed down through the Lanier family. She was too young to have personal recollections about the Lanier holdings on the arsenal.

The family charts presented on the following pages were compiled by McKinley Jones. He has traced his lineage from his maternal great grandparents, Ben Lanier and Edna Lanier and his paternal great grandparents, Paul L. Jones, Sr. and Lucy Ann Jones, all of whom were born in slavery.

**Ben Lanier (Born 1840) and Edna Lanier (Born 1851)**  
The maternal great grandparents of McKinley Jones

Jerry Lanier (1867)

Davy Lanier 1870

**Hezekiah (Isikia) Lanier (1872)**  
Maternal grandfather of McKinley Jones

Malan Lanier (1873) (son)

George W. Lanier (1876)

John W. Lanier (1880)

Arthur Lanier (1884)

Ben Eddie Lanier (1885)

Alexander Lanier (1886)

Joseph Lanier (1889)

Mattie Lee Lanier Alls (1891)

Mandy Lanier Beasley (1892)

**The Brothers of  
Ben Lanier:**

Davey (Crockett)  
Jerry Lanier  
Robert Lanier

**(The Reverend) Hezekiah Lanier, Sr. (1872)  
and Mary Eliza Russell Lanier (1876)**  
The maternal grandparents of McKinley Jones

(The Reverend) Hezekiah Lanier, Jr. (1898)

Willie Lanier (1900)

Dave Lanier (1903)

**Mary Lou Lanier (1907)**  
Mother of McKinley Jones

Malan (Fetie) Lanier (1908)

Lucille Lanier (1910)

Suzie Lanier Beasley (1912)

Jerry Lanier

Carrie Lanier Bradford



Dave Lanier



Hezekiah Lanier,  
Jr.

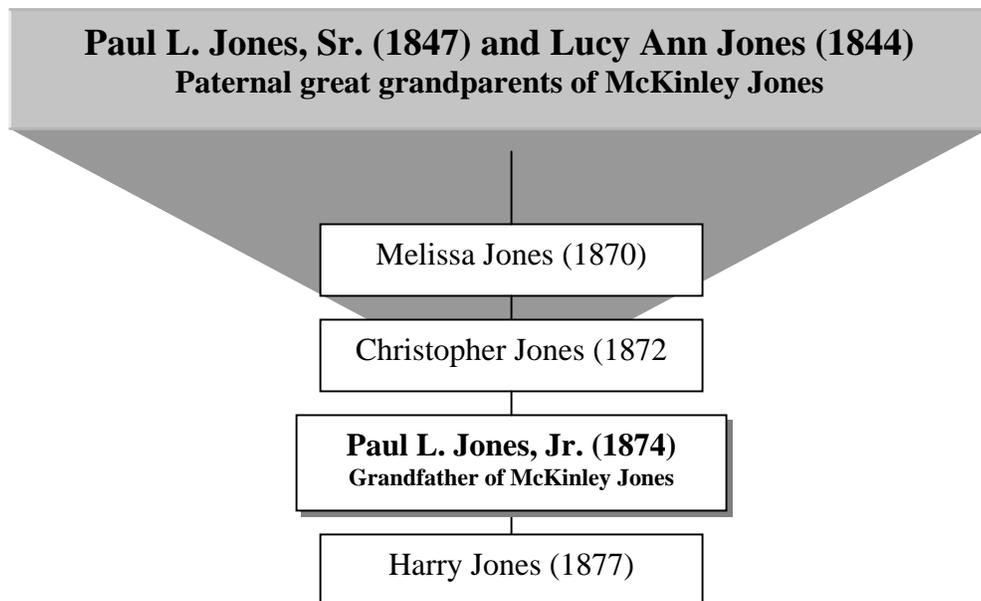


Grandchild of  
Hezekiah, died of  
rheumatic fever in  
1939, about 9  
years of age.



**Hezekiah Lanier, Sr.** The grandfather of McKinley Jones. Hezekiah's father was purchased as a slave in Mobile and brought back to the Lanier family plantation. Jones researched the records of the plantation owner in order to document his ancestors. The Lanier family (White) had extensive land holdings on what is now Redstone Arsenal and in Madison.

## THE PAUL JONES FAMILY



**Paul L. Jones, Jr. (1874) and Letha Jane Donegan Jones (1880)**  
**Paternal grandparents of McKinley Jones**

**McKinley Jones, Sr. (1897)**  
Father of McKinley Jones

Paul L. Jones III (1898)

Moses Jones (1901)

Annie Jones Binder (1902)

Lucan Jones (1904) (dau)

Letha Mary Jones Anthony (1910)

Virgie Jones (1912) (dau)

Edna Jones Mannings (1913)

**Jane Donegan died in childbirth after the birth of Edna.**

**Paul L. Jones, Jr. and second wife, Courtney Jones (1895)**

Adelle Jones (1914)

Bessie M. Jones (1919)



**Mary Eliza Russell Lanier (born 1876). She was the maternal grandmother of McKinley Jones. Her third son, Willie (McKinley's uncle), is standing on her left. To the right is McKinley Jones. The date of the photo is not known, but McKinley Jones is past 80 years old now.**

The family tree compiled by McKinley Jones shows Ben Lanier, his maternal great grandfather, as being born in 1840. The 1880 census shows Ben Lanier as age 45 in 1880, which would put his birth date back to 1835. The census shows Edna Lanier as being age 20, which would put her birth date at 1860; McKinley Jones has it listed as 1851. It seems probable that the birth dates provided by McKinley Jones are the correct ones for two reasons: (1) McKinley Jones has done considerable records research on his family, and (2) according to the census dates, Edna Lanier was 20 years old and her son Jerry was 13, which would have made her 7 years old at the time of his birth. The date of her birth as recorded by McKinley Jones would have her being 16 years old at time of his birth. It is reasonable to suggest that the birthdates shown on the census are not accurate.

The birthdates for the children are the same on both the census and the family tree drawn by McKinley Jones.

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### Madison County, Alabama Census, 1880

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 104B

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>AL</b>	
Edna LANIER	Wife	F		M	B 20	AL
Jerry LANIER	Son	M		S	B 13	AL
Davy LANIER	Son	M		S	B 10	AL
Isikia LANIER	Son	M		S	B 7	AL
Malan LANIER	Son	M	S	B	6	AL
George W. LANIER	Son	M	S	B	3	AL
John W. LANIER	Son	M	S	B	6	MAL

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### McKinley Jones: His Boyhood

**Where He Lived.** McKinley Jones said there were three houses on the parcel of land where he grew up, near Indian Creek Cemetery on what is now Test Area 3. He said where he lived was north of Indian Creek Cemetery where David Jones, his baby brother, was buried. The cemetery is on Parcel B-57, which was shown on the Army Real Estate Map as being owned by Mollie Jones at the time the Government took ownership in 1941.

McKinley Jones said that one time or another, he lived with his family in each of the three houses. He said the landowner was M.G. Chaney. Eventually his family moved to another place not too far away from there. He couldn't remember why. The property shown on the Army Real Estate Map (of 1941) that was owned by M.G. Chaney did not fit the description of the location given by Jones. Thus, the researcher asked Jones to accompany her to Test Area 3 and try to place the location. Based on this, the parcel was speculated to be Parcel B-61, shown as owned by Walter F. Chaney. Jones felt sure his family had lived on M.G. Chaney property. As it turned out, they were both right.

The reason why the Jones family moved from that parcel of land was discovered quite by chance several years later when the researcher was talking with members of the M.G. Chaney family. She related a story Jones had told her. The comments from the researcher's discussion with McKinley Jones about the boy and about the property are presented in the section of this report entitled The Chaney Family, under the subheading, Parcel B-61: The Move to Papa Chaney's Place.

In discussing where he lived, McKinley Jones said:

Sharecroppers didn't own anything. They'd go to work and give the owner 50%. Daddy moved around, but in the same area. Sometimes just one house to the other. We lived in three different houses within a city block. All the people there were tenant farmers.

They tell me when they [the slaves] were freed, they had to give them land, but they managed to take it away from them. Granddad [Hezekiah Lanier] managed to keep the Rideout/Martin Road piece.

According to McKinley Jones, Hezekiah Lanier (born 1872), his maternal grandfather, owned land at the dead end of Rideout and Martin Road. The Army Real Estate Map shows that at the time the Government acquired the land, Parcel B-73, which is located on the east side of Rideout Road and north side of Martin Road, was owned by Annie T. Lanier. At some point, Hezekiah had moved to "town," but "he came out and farmed the land."

### **Daily Life on the Farm**

When asked about his life and that of his family, McKinley Jones said:

My father [McKinley Jones, Sr.] had a buggy and a mule, and a horse sometimes. In the area where we lived, about all owned their own mules. The horse and the mule was the same thing. If you had both, you could put the horse and the mule to a plow, but you could leave the mule plowing and then take the horse to town. Most people around the area had two mules [rather than a horse and mule].

Most people had chickens, because that was all you'd get, your hogs and chickens and garden. The chicken house was a little, small house. Sometimes you had to bend over to get in. There was a door for you to get in and poles for the chickens to roost on at night. There was a hole up in the wall, about 12 inches by 12 inches, and the roost poles.

The nests with straw in them were along the wall. The kids would gather the eggs. We usually didn't break them, because when dad got through with you. . . .

If the hens were laying good, they laid one egg a day. Over the summer and winter you usually wouldn't get that many. A hen might get maybe 12 and quit. Sometimes a hen would steal away in the woods, and when you'd find her, she'd come up with a bunch of chickens, but this was dangerous for her because there were snakes and everything out there.

Some people sold eggs. You'd take them to the store to sell if you had transportation. Transportation then was buggies, horses, and wagons.

I'm thinking back to when I was 12, 13, 14, 15 years old.

The peddler came by. He'd buy eggs. We'd use the money to buy other things from him. The rolling store came through twice a week. That was a truck with a covered back on it. The peddler would start blowing [the horn] when he came through. He had a coop under his truck. You could sell chickens to the rolling store.

**The Store.** The researcher asked about going to the store. McKinley Jones answered:

There was no store down where we lived. The only store was close to Elko switch, but we never went up there. The other store was Jesse Brown. All the farmers from this area go to Jesse Brown's store on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue in west Huntsville. It's at Triana and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. A brick store. It has Jesse Brown's name on it.

**Selling Vegetables.** McKinley Jones said:

We grew vegetables. We sold vegetables to White people in town. We'd go house to house. Sometimes we sold corn to Jesse Brown. He had a gristmill in back of the store. If we had corn, they'd grind it—give you one bushel and keep one.

**A Typical Meal.** When asked what his family would have for a typical meal, McKinley Jones answered, "Whatever we could raise." He went on to say:

We grew corn, snap beans, cabbage, potatoes, watermelons, collards, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes. Some things were seasonal. My mother canned peaches, peas, apples, plums and blackberries and made preserves. Grapes were wild. You'd find the grapes in a tree. Wine was made out of grapes.

The cabbage came early. Then the tomatoes and corn came in. Then snap beans. You could keep collards all winter. We would set them out in a bed and put a top (brush and wood) over the top to keep the snow off. The

white potatoes came early. Sweet potato gathering time was in August. We'd bed them out in the winter. Sometimes that would be under the house. People usually didn't have a cellar. Some houses were on the side of a hill and high in one place and low in another. Some high, some low, depending on where they were built. People would scrape the dirt back and build a box from ground to the floor of the house—a box so the chickens and cold air couldn't get in. Most of the time they wouldn't rot.

Dad had his own stock. He had cows. He'd sell the calves. We had milk, and butter was churned. Dad would butcher a hog every year and we made sausage. We had a hand grinder. Dad made a meat box. You get some salt, rub the meat down good and put it in the box. Once in a while you'd rub it down again. When it was cured, you'd take it out and hang it. Most people would find a place in the kitchen. Some people had a smoke house.

**Fishing.** When asked about fishing, McKinley Jones said:

We'd go fishing. We had homemade poles. Dad hunted for rabbits. He shot rabbits and quails, but he never killed a lot of squirrels.

**Washday.** McKinley Jones described washday. He said washing clothes was the women's task. The clothes were washed in the back yard in a big pot setting on some rocks. They lived on the bank of Indian Creek, so buckets of water would be brought from the creek and poured into the big pot. Then a fire was lit under the pot. A rubbing board and lye soap was used to get the clothes clean. They made their own soap, but once made it lasted a while: "We didn't have to make it too often."

### **Social Interaction in the Pre-Arsenal Communities**

When the researcher talked with Reverend Jones in August of 2005, at the end of her tenure as the Staff Archaeologist at Redstone Arsenal, she discussed some of the statements other elderly Black people had made regarding the inequities, and sometimes abuses, they had suffered in daily life in the community in the years prior to World War II (and its aftermath). Many people would mention inequities, but they also would say, "We all got along."

The researcher also discussed what she had been told by the people she had interviewed with Professor Robert Sigler (White) at the University of Alabama. He teaches a course in cultural diversity and focuses on race relations. He said that in the time period being discussed, "everyone knew the rules," so there was a mode of behavior that was known and accepted by everyone (both Blacks and Whites) which facilitated social interaction. Thus, "they all got along." While there is no doubt the "rules" of behavior and social interaction between the races were known by the community, the researcher questioned the statement because of the word "accepted." The professor agreed that this was

probably not the best word, and questioned how it could be better stated. This was a research question to be addressed.

The Reverend Jones has spent years helping people with their problems. It had become apparent to the researcher that he is a wise and insightful man. His path in life, that of quietly mentoring and supporting people to help them in both religious and secular matters, has been akin more to the teachings of Martin Luther King than the confrontational approach of Jesse Jackson. The researcher was confident that the Reverend Jones would either answer a question about the racial issue frankly and with insight or not answer it at all.

Thus, the researcher explained the context of the question to Reverend Jones and asked if he could give a concise statement that would explain the issue of inequities, and sometimes abuses, as they were experienced in the communities in pre-arsenal times, and the known rules of behavior, from the perspective of the Black community. He said:

It was a matter of learning how to survive. You don't like what it is, but you know it's real—like this thing here is red hot, and you know if you put your hand on it, it will burn your hand. The sensible thing to do is **don't touch it.**

One might have a strong desire to break the rules, but if he did break them, he alone probably would not pay the price—his entire family would.

## **POLLY WHITE ISAACS**

Telephone interview 2005

Polly White Isaacs was interviewed by telephone.

### **The Family**

Polly White Isaacs was born December 28, 1913, the daughter of Forest White and Fannie Morris White. Her grandparents and relatives who were mentioned:

**Father's father:** Adolphus White

**Father's mother:** Polly Lacy White

**Father's sister:** Mary Ellen Jordan

**Mother's father:** Henry Morris

**Mother's mother:** Louise Lynn Morris

**Mother's sisters:** Beulah May Patton  
Lucy Elliott

Polly Isaacs said her grandparents, Adolphus and Polly White, raised cattle and picked cotton. She said Adolphus owned his own house. His name was not shown on the Army Real Estate Map as it was drawn in 1942. The property was probably in the name of heirs. Polly commented, "Leila [Crutcher?], Daddy's sister, never did get her money." Polly stated that the family never did settle a price with the government for the property, so they never got any money, and the property was "just taken" by the Government.

Polly said her Grandma Louise Morris lived in a three-room shack. It had a front porch. There were two rooms in the front. Each one had a door from the porch. Behind the room on the right, a third room had been added at some point in time, and it was the kitchen. Going out the kitchen door, there was a porch. The house was set up a couple feet off of the ground. Polly Isaacs added, "and it had Mule Tar paper, that was our veneer." The smoke house was not far off the porch. The outhouse was further back.

### **Daily Life**

Polly's Grandma Morris raised cotton, hogs, chickens, guineas, and a cow. She had a barn, beehives, and an outhouse. The Hoskins lived right across from her.

Polly said when she was young, the girls played hide and seek and jumped rope. The boys shot marbles. She said, "We had tin tubs and washboards, and an iron kettle. Father rolled his cigarettes with Bull Durham tobacco. My grandparents didn't smoke anything. Some people dipped snuff."

**School.** Polly Isaacs said:

The first school I went to was after I got six years old. There wasn't but one teacher and he taught every class. His name was Sheffield, and he lived in Decatur. That was down off Highway 20 at a church called Living Water. We were living in Limestone County near Greenbriar. Near Bell Mina.

We moved to the arsenal about 1937. Then I went to school at Union Hill Church. We had two teachers. One was Lucy Jane Humphrey. The other was Beulah May Patton. She was my mother's sister. We walked a couple miles to school. I know we went and came on time. Indian Creek ran through where we went to school and where we lived. We lived up the hill from Indian Creek. There was high rocks and a thing called a bluff. We had a pasture there where we put the horse and cows. We had to walk a foot log to get across to the school. The Army put in a bridge there before we left.

**Neighbors.** McKinley Jones lived on the next farm. Polly said her grandpa and Hezekiah Lanier were close neighbors, so the children knew each other. In reading her notes, it was not clear to the researcher whether Forest White lived near his father. The researcher made a second call to Polly Isaac in April of 2005, about a month after the first call, but Mrs. Isaacs did not seem to be feeling well. The researcher felt she should not intrude upon Mrs. Isaacs further.

**Inman Cemetery.** Polly said mother died in 1939 on the day her father's sister, Mary Ellen Jordan, was buried. She said they were buried in Inman Cemetery.

## THE JOHN HERTZLER FAMILY OF OHIO: On Pre-Arsenal Land?

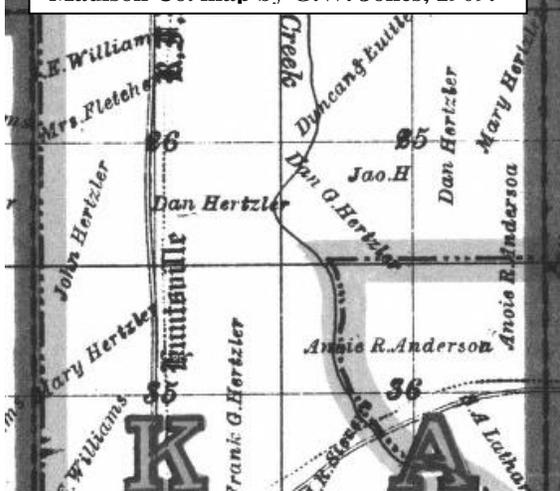
In 1908, The Business Men's League of Huntsville, Alabama printed a booklet, entitled *Huntsville and Madison, County, Alabama*, that was sent to other parts of the United States to "anticipate and answer, as far as possible, the many questions that the Health and Homeseeker and Investor would naturally ask." The booklet was "illustrative and descriptive," showing local businesses and homes. The photographs of the "Farm Residence of John Hertzler, formerly of Ohio" and the "Modern Barn on the Hertzler Farm" were included. A discussion following the photographs provides evidence for the assertion that these structures were on land that is now Redstone Arsenal (in Test Area 3).



**Farm Residence of John Hertzler, formerly of Ohio. Source: Business Men's League of Huntsville, Alabama, 1908.**

A map of Madison County compiled in 1909 (by G.W. Jones) showed the Hertzler family owning a number of parcels of land in the area around Indian Creek (now Test Area 3 on Redstone Arsenal). In looking at the first names of the 1909 landowners, they appear to be the children of John Hertzler. The names Mary, Dan, and John Hertzler appear, as well as an Annie Anderson (one daughter was named Annie). By the time of sale to the Government in 1941, one parcel remained in Hertzler ownership, Parcel B-92 (Ida Hertzler). It was a large parcel and bordered Parcel B-61 (W.F. Chaney) on its east and south boundaries.

Madison Co. map by G.W. Jones, 1909.



The John Hertzler who owned the farm in the photograph was identified as being from Ohio. An 1875 county map shows John Hertzler owning land in Sections 25, 26, 35, and 36. This is in the area of Indian Creek (Test Area 3). The 1880 Madison County census shows John Hertzler, head of household, being 52 years old and a farmer. His wife, Annie, was 48. They were born in Pennsylvania; however, their six children all were shown as born in Ohio. The children were Franklin (age 22), Annie R. (age 19), John R. (age 17), Fannie E. (age 13), and Daniel (age 11).

Twenty years later, in 1900, the family patriarch, John Hertzler, was 72 years of age and his wife Annie was 68. Their son Franklin (Frank) had married, and he and his wife Marietta and their son and daughter (John R. and Frankie) lived in a separate household. However, John Hertzler, Jr. (age 37), David (age 31), and Fannie (age 33) continued to live at the farm with their parents. Also living in the household were two servants, William Toney (age 40) and Aubry Toney (age 12). By this time, it is highly probable that John Hertzler's son John was running the farm.

Based on the above, it is asserted that the John Hertzler Farm House and Barn shown in the 1908 photographs were on the Hertzler property on the arsenal. The names of John Hertzler's children are the Hertzler landowners shown on the 1909 map.



Modern Barn on the John Hertzler Farm. Source: The Business Men's League of Huntsville, 1908.

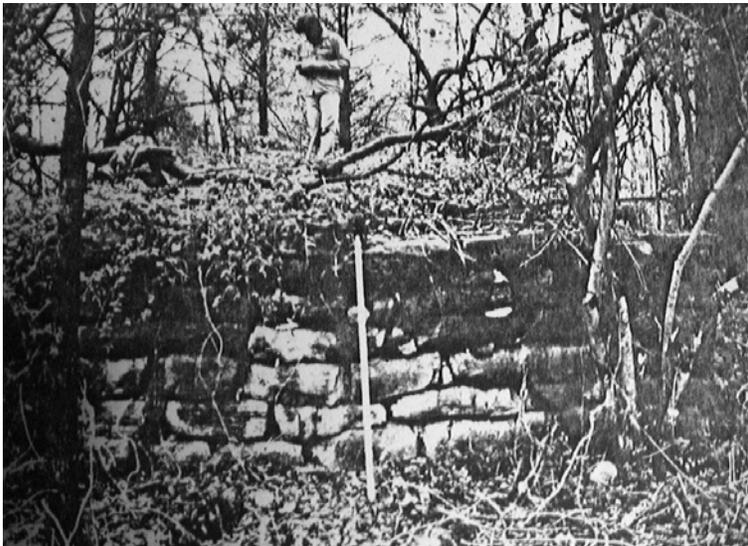
## Evidence that the Barn and House were Located on RSA Land

Evidence supporting the contention that the house and barn shown in the photographs were located on what is now Redstone Arsenal was found in a report entitled the *Hertzler Place: A Late Nineteenth Century Ruin on Redstone Arsenal*, written by Charles Hubbert (1985). Hubbert conducted an archaeological reconnaissance, which included the excavation of four test units and an “oral history search” on an abandoned house site on RSA. He said the site was locally known as the Hertzler place. Hubbert said the house site was “atop a prominent place, elevated some 35 feet above the surrounding terrain” (p. 1). It was recorded as archaeological site 1Ma240.

Hubbert documented the house as being in the NE ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 35, T4S, R2W. The Army Real Estate Map shows that at the time of sale to the Army in 1941, this was part of a large parcel (B-68) owned by J. E. Williams. Section 35 is shown on the map on the previous page. Hubbert said the house had been of Victorian style architecture and was said to have been built by John Hertzler.

Present on the site were the remains of an outhouse, a capped cistern, and a barn. Adjacent to the barn was an earthen ramp supported by hammer-dressed limestone. A photograph of the remains of the ramp is included in Hubbert’s report.

When Hubbert interviewed Carl Allen Williams, nephew of James Edward Williams, who was the last owner of the Hertzler place, Williams stated the elevated ramp had abutted the barn; it had been constructed to facilitate the loading of hay. He commented to Hubbert, “How many barns have you seen where you can roll hay down into the loft rather than throwing them up? Saves a lot of labor and time” (p. 15).



**This is the photograph that Charles Hubbert took of the remains of the barn ramp.**

Based on a comparison of the ramp shown in this photograph and the ramp abutting the barn shown in the photograph of the Hertzler barn on the previous page, it is asserted that the barn pictured by the Business Men’s League of Huntsville in 1908 is the barn that was on the Hertzler property on the arsenal.

## **DOROTHY HARRIS FOSTER** (Descended from William Harris I)

Dorothy Harris Foster is the daughter of Emma Ragland Harris and Oregon Harris. Her great grandfather, William Harris I, was born in Virginia in about 1828. She said he had a Black mother and a White father who “most likely brought him to Madison County before slavery was abolished.” He lived and was buried on land that is now Redstone Arsenal.

### **Location of the Property**

The property that William Harris I owned and farmed was the West ½ of Section 26, Range 2W, Township 4S on the USGS 7.5' Madison, Alabama. This is south of the location of the Union Hill Presbyterian Church on Anderson Road. It was on the west side of Inman Cemetery, and immediately south of the property that would later be owned by Zummer and James Holding (Parcel B-52).

The parcel is shown outlined on the 1997 Seeger Map Co. Huntsville, Alabama Street Map. The parcel extended to the west across what is now the arsenal boundary and Zierdt Road. For reference, the intersection of Zierdt Road and Martin Road is shown on the map insert.



### **The Family**

The July 23, 1870 Madison County Census shows the family of William Harris I in T4, R2W. His yearly income was shown as \$900. William Harris, the head of household, was classified as mulatto; he and his wife, Richetta, were both shown as being 42 years of age. Children listed were: Dillie (Delia), age 18; Carrie (Caroline), age 16; Shelley, age 11; Vinia (Lavinia), age 9; William II, age 6; Silas, age 7; and Richetta, age 1. The children age 11 and up were listed as farm laborers. William II would grow up to become Dorothy’s grandfather.

William Harris I died in 1874, four years after this census was taken. The 1880 Madison County Census shows N.S. Harris as a head of household. Based on the age (22), N.S. would have been Shelly, who was listed as 11 years old in the 1870 census. His occupation was listed as Farmer. His sister Carrie, then 25 years old, had the designation “Keep House.” Silas, Lavinia, William, and little Richetta were siblings living in the household. The Richetta who was their mother is not shown, so it is probable that she had died by then. The Warranty Deed filed after the death of William on December 2,

1874 shows an appraisal of the personal property, which includes a category for the appraisal of the apparel of the wife and children. The words “the wife” were struck through and no apparel was listed for her, which suggests she died prior to that date.



**Lou Dawson Harris, wife of William Harris II, in about 1910 (photographed from a painting).  
William Harris II, who was born in 1866, in about 1910.**

Henry Harris is also listed as a head of household in the 1880 census. He was shown as age 40, so he would have been about 12 years younger than William Harris. He was listed as a Farmer. He also was born in Virginia, in 1840. This would indicate that both he and William Harris I were brought to Madison County by the same White owner. Since those born in slavery generally took the last names of their owners, the relationship of William Harris I and Henry Harris could simply be that. However, Henry’s wife’s name was Lavinia, and William Harris I named a daughter Lavinia, which suggests the two men may have been brothers or otherwise related. Henry Harris’ wife was born in Alabama.

Both William and his wife Richetta are shown to have been born in Virginia. The children present in their household in 1870 were all born in Alabama. April 6, 1865 was the date the Civil War ended. Five of William’s children (Delia, Caroline, Shelley, Lavinia, and Silas) were born into slavery. Dorothy Harris Foster was told by her mother that her grandfather’s sister Lavinia was very fair in complexion, “so fair I think she

passed as White,” Dorothy stated. Dorothy said Lavinia went to Athens College, and passing as White would have been required in order for her to do that back then.

Dorothy said William Harris I had property and was farming it before slavery was abolished. Blacks who owned property couldn’t put it in their own name. She said he owned the property before 1867, but it was probably not recorded in his name. This was because of what could be termed social issues at that time in history. The warranty deed from William Holding was filed in 1874. The property was in T4, R2W, Section 26. Section 26 borders Anderson Road to the west, on Test Area 3.

Dorothy Foster had photocopies of the following deeds showing the history of the land ownership:

- December 30, 1839 Isaac Inman. Filed January 4, 1840. Deed of Trust. NW ¼, Sec. 26, R2W, Deed Book R., p. 363.
- November 22, 1841, John J. Coleman to William Robertson, Filed November 25, 1841, Deed of Trust. NW ¼, Sec. 26, T4, R2W.
- August 1, 1811, Wm. Robertson and Wife to William Holding. NW ¼, Sec. 26, T4, R2W, filed August 5, 1844, Warranty Deed, Deed Book V, p. 4.

Richard Holding deeded both the SW ¼ and the NW ¼ of Section 26 to his son William in 1856, prior to the Civil War. The deed for the southwest parcel shows it was a gift. The northwest parcel was probably a gift also.

- December 31, 1855, Richard Holding to William Holding, Deed of Gift. SW ¼, Sec. 26, T4, R2W, Filed April 24, 1856. Consideration: Love and Affection.

Dorothy said other papers say William Harris owned the west half of Section 26 in 1867. She said “He owned it and was farming it before slavery was abolished.” It is reasonable to suggest that if this occurred, it would have been associated with the fact that his father was a White man who might have overseen his welfare. During the course of talking with other families, it was found that in some cases early Black landowners did not have recorded deeds. When they died, reputable men who had lived in the community and had known them for many years signed sworn statements to attest to the land ownership of the deceased.

The ownership of the West ½ of Section 26 by William Harris I is without doubt, as evidenced by the Warranty Deed filed after his death on December 2, 1874 (Deed YY, p. 310). It shows his heirs and also lists his possessions and debts at the time of his death. The handwriting from the original document is difficult to read in many places, but it does provide insight about the home and farming of William Harris as it was in 1874, on the land that is now Test Area 3. It is evident that his household effects were simple ones needed in every-day life, and he had the essentials in tools and stock. It also shows he had two cotton gins.

The following is taken verbatim from warranty deed; dashes have been inserted in places where the handwriting could not be deciphered.

*Inventory of the goods and Chattels, Books, Papers and Evidences of debt of the Estate of William Harris deceased.*  
[1874]

1. *Four Second Mortgage Bonds of Memphis & Charleston Rail Road Company of One Thousand [1000 is written in the margin] Dollars Each No's 0468, 0664-0485-0484- Dated at Huntsville Ala January 1<sup>st</sup> 1867 And redeemable on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1885- Bearing Seven (7) Per Cent interest-payable Semi Annually in the City of New York on the 1<sup>st</sup> days of January & July.* \$2680.00

*Approximate Value*

2. <i>Eleven Mules (11)</i>	\$ 700.00
3. <i>Three (3) Wagons</i>	120.00
4. <i>Eleven (11) pair of [gear?]</i>	6.00
5. <i>Two (2) pair of H---r [nip?]</i>	20.00
6. <i>One (1) Bellows</i>	26.00
7. <i>Three (3) Chopping Axes</i>	2.50
8. <i>Three (3) Hatchets</i>	2.00
9. <i>One (1) Saw</i>	.25
10. <i>One (1) Brace</i> <span style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px;">11. <i>Thirteen (13) Bits</i></span>	5.00
12. <i>Two (2) Screw Drivers</i>	
13. <i>Five (5) Augers</i>	2.00
14. <i>Nine (9) Chisels</i>	4.00
15. <i>One (1) Saddle and Bridle</i>	12.00
16. <i>Two (2) Tubbs</i>	1.50
17. <i>Two (2) double-horse plows</i>	12.00
18. <i>Twelve (12) Head of Cattle</i>	400.00
19. <i>Twenty (20) Pigs</i>	40.00
20. <i>Five (5) Toms</i>	20.00
21. <i>One (1) Boar</i>	3.00
22. <i>Four (4) Barrows</i>	16.00
23. <i>Three (3) Shovels</i>	1.50
24. <i>One (1) Spade</i>	.50
25. <i>One (1) Gun</i>	20.00
26. <i>One (1) Pistol</i>	1.00
27. <i>One (1) pair of Ballances &amp; p---</i>	2.50
28. <i>Eleven (11) Bales of Cotton—Average weight, 110.00</i>	[770.00]

29. <i>One (1) Wheel Barrow</i>	.50
30. <i>Eleven (11) Single trees &amp; Clivesses</i> [Clevises]	6.00
31. <i>Seven (7) Harrows</i>	12.00
32. <i>Two (2) Kettles</i>	2.00
33. <i>Two (2) Pots</i>	1.00
34. <i>Two (2) Ovens</i>	1.00
35. <i>One (1) Skillet</i>	.50
36. <i>One (1) Tea Kettle</i>	.50
37. <i>One (1) Churn</i>	.50
38. <i>Three Buckets</i>	.60
39. <i>Two (2) Pails</i>	1.00
40. <i>One (1) Sifter and Tray</i>	.75
41. <i>Two (2) Dippers &amp; wash pan</i>	.50
42. <i>One dozen (1) plate &amp; set [dies?]</i>	2.00
43. <i>One Coffee Pot</i>	.10
44. <i>Two Razors &amp; Hone</i>	.50
45. <i>One (1) Wheel &amp; Cards</i>	3.00
46. <i>Two (2) Cotton Gins</i>	100.00
47. <i>Two (2) Beds</i>	10.00
48. <i>One (1) Trunk</i>	2.50
49. <i>Six (6) Chairs</i>	3.00
50. <i>One (1) Beau ro</i>	5.00
51. <i>One (1) Clock</i>	5.00
52. <i>One (1) Pair Saddle Bags</i>	.50
53. <i>One Safe &amp; Wash Stand</i>	5.00
54. <i>Two (2) Dishes</i>	1.00
55. <i>Two (2) Sets of Knives &amp; Forks</i>	2.00
56. <i>One (1) Set of Plates</i>	.75
57. <i>One (1) Dish pan</i>	.50
58. <i>One (1) Set of Cups &amp; Saucers</i>	.75
59. <i>Three (3) Umbrellas</i>	.50
60. <i>Three (3) Tables</i>	3.00
61. <i>One (1) Sachel</i> [Satchel]	.15
62. <i>One (1) Pair of Dog irons</i>	1.00
63. <i>One (1) Lamp &amp; Oil Can</i>	1.00
64. <i>One (1) Broom</i>	.15
65. <i>Five (5) Bags</i>	2.50
66. <i>One (1) Shop Book</i>	.00
67. <i>One (1) Form Book</i>	.00
68. <i>Shovel &amp; Tongs</i>	.00

### *Evidences of Debt*

69. One Hundred and Thirteen 70/100 Dollars on Acct for lumber bought of May New Lowry & Co and paid in full by William M. Holding for which Wm Harris died was liable for One Half (1/2).	113.70
70. One Note to William M. Holding for Four Thousand (4,160) One Hundred and Sixty Dollars for the purchase of Three Hundred (320) and Twenty Acres of land situated in Madison County Alabama -Executed by Wm Harris May the 26 <sup>th</sup> 1873. Upon said Note there are two credits— One for the Sum of Three (3,000) Thousand Dollars May 26, 1873—the other for Three (305) Hundred and Five Dollars Feb 20 <sup>th</sup> 1874—leaving balance due—	
71. Cash on Hand	416.00

*Inventory of the goods and Chattel Books ----- and List of Personal Property Exempt from Administration under Section 12 of An Act "To Regulate Property C 1872-3. for the benefit of the minor Children of William Harris deceased*

*Appraised Value*

1. Wearing apparel of the deceased	25.00
2. " " of the <del>Widow</del> & Children [Note: the words "the Widow" were crossed out on the document]	35.00
3. Five (5) Stacks of fodder	25.00
4. Three (3) Gallons of vinegar	1.50
5. 1/2 Barrell of Lard	12.50
6. Twenty (22) Two Gallons of Syrup	11.00
7. Six (6) Bushels of Wheat	6.00
8. Six (6) " " Peas	3.00
9. Six (6) Hogs heads	12.00
Approximate Value	
10. 1/2 Barrel of Flour	5.00

*State of Alabama Madison County*

*The foregoing Appraisement sworn to and subscribed before me this the 4<sup>th</sup> day of June 1874*

*[Signed] A. S. Fletcher - Wm Holding appraiser  
W.R. Johnston*

Dorothy Foster said it was Judge Robert Spragins who settled the estate of her great grandfather, William Harris I. Delia had married two years prior to her father's death, in 1872. She married Ambrose Mendum. Dorothy said she was told that history indicates he was a wheeler-dealer-crook. As the husband of Delia, he was the administrator of William's estate. All the children except Delia continued to live in William's house. The

1880 census, which was discussed earlier in this section, shows the siblings still living together at that time.

William's residence was held in trust for two years, 1875-1876. The trust authorized the hiring of laborers and everything necessary "to conduct farming in an economical manner."

Dorothy Foster had spent a great deal of time looking up records in the library to learn more about the family history and to document what she had been told through oral history. As administrator of William's will, Ambrose Mendum had to render an account of sales. Dorothy said Mendum wanted to sell eleven bales of cotton, which he said he'd need to take care of the kids. He sold it. Then he and Delia took the money and went off to Memphis. Shelley petitioned the courts, saying it was embezzlement. However, both Delia and Ambrose Mendum died in Memphis in 1879. Dorothy said their death might have been a result of their manner of living.

At that point, Shelley petitioned to be the administrator. He was the brother who became the head of the household. Caroline (Carrie) died in 1886. Since two of William's daughters died without heirs, the property went back to the estate, which was then divided between his five remaining children.

Dorothy Foster said Shelley, Silas, and Richetta mortgaged their land to Lavinia. As mentioned above, Lavinia was the one who went to Athens College, therefore, must have passed for White. Dorothy Foster's notes showed the following:

March 20, 1884, Shelley Harris to Lavinia Harris, Quit Claim Deed. West ½, Section 26, T4, R2W, Estate of William Harris, \$200. Deed III, p. 616.

June 16, 1884, Field June 18, 1884, Silas Harris to Harper & Love, West ½ of Sec. 26, T4, R2W.

February 11, 1888, S.A.L. (Silas) Harris to Ephraim Ward, West ½ Sec. 26, T4, R2W, Field March 28, 1888, \$137 due November 11, 1888, Book 28, p. 44.

Lavinia A. Harris Williams (daughter) to North American Mortg. Ltd. Book 59, p. 172.

William Harris II, Dorothy Foster's grandfather, was the only sibling who did not mortgage his share of the inherited land to Lavinia; thus, he was able to retain it.

Dorothy said her father, Oregon Harris, was the son of William II. He and his wife, Emma, had four children, and they lived in Triana. He owned 300 acres where Dorothy Harris Foster lives today. Her home, which is like a small estate, is about four miles

south of Martin Road on the west side of Zierdt Road. It is probable that Oregon's grandfather or father owned other parcels.

Dorothy said her Uncle John (son of William Harris II) share cropped on his own father's land, and his first child was born on what is now Redstone Arsenal in 1920. John Harris's wife was Marie Tony. Dorothy Harris Foster said:

She [John Harris's wife] was called Marie Rice at birth, but her father was John Toney, a White man. John Toney's family owned a large house and owned land in Triana and surrounding areas. The Toney's were wealthy at one time. John Toney had several liaisons with Black women, and, as a result, fathered several mixed race children. White men took advantage of their farm help, Black women, during that era. Marie Toney was born December 27, 1900. John Toney lived off his family's money.

At this point in the discussion, Dorothy said that Black people had no rights in those days. A White man could do what he wanted with a Black woman. There was nothing she could do about it. The law wouldn't do anything about it. If she complained, she would bring trouble on herself and her family.

She stated that in those days, there were no rights for Black people, not in criminal or civil matters. If Whites committed criminal acts against Blacks, they were not taken to court. White men did not give receipts to Black people. If there was a difference of opinion, whatever the White man said was the truth, regardless of the facts.

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Note: Dorothy Foster's statement that a White man could "do what he wanted" with a Black woman back in those days, and there was nothing the Black woman could do about it," is a statement that can be read and accepted. The evidence of its occurrence can be felt in the reluctance of some Black people to talk about their genealogy, and it is, in a sense, "documented" in photographs of "Black people" who resulted from the "no recourse" reunions. However, the true impact of the "no recourse" social setting that existed throughout the communities in that era can be felt by those who did not live "back then" by reading one woman's first hand account.

In February of 2005, the author/researcher was asked to participate in the Alabama Historical Commission/Black Heritage Council forum as a panelist. It was agreed that she would discuss her research at the forum, which took place in Madison, Alabama. She asked that the publicity announcement of the meeting include mention of the fact that she would like to meet and interview people who could tell her about the pre-arsenal communities. The forum was held in a church. After the researcher had spoken, an elderly woman approached her and said she wanted to tell her about "life back then."

The researcher ascertained that the woman had not lived within the boundary of what is now Redstone Arsenal; "back then" she lived on Gillespie Road, which went northwest of the Elko community. The area was rural then, but Gillespie Road can be seen on modern maps of Madison.

Until the time of the meeting at the church, the researcher had not recorded information from people unless they or their relatives had lived within the boundary of the present-day arsenal. The author gently mentioned that to the elderly lady, but the woman insisted that she wanted to tell the researcher about "how

it was.” The woman seemed to feel that the White researcher might be writing a “selective” history that would not be a true picture of life as it was. Thus, the researcher opened her notebook and, with pen in hand, began to listen and to write.

The quotation from this woman is presented below because it provides a first-hand experience that illustrates what Dorothy Foster said above: “A White man could do what he wanted with a Black woman.” Not all White men behaved without conscience, but some did, and the quotation reveals another aspect of the life of some of the Black women who were part of the sharecropper communities.

The woman who is quoted lived (“back then”) along Gillespie Road, in a location that could easily have been part of the arsenal had the boundary been cut a bit differently. Gillespie Road was still a rural area in 1941. While the woman has not been referred to by name here, this is not because of her lack of consent. She insisted the researcher could use her name. However, giving her name would not add to the impact of her words and might be unappreciated by some of her younger family members. By the same token, the names of the men she tells about have been replaced with a blank.

\_\_\_\_\_ lived on one side of the road and his brother lived on the other. \_\_\_\_\_ raped me when I was eleven years old.

My mother was a sharecropper on his property. She sent me to the big house to get milk. I had my dime to pay for it. She told my brother to go with me. Maybe there was a reason. But my brother didn’t go to the door with me. He was playing with the dog.

I went up and knocked at the door. Sara Rice, the [Black] housekeeper, was not there. He answered the door himself. He took my hand and led me in. Instead of getting the jug [of milk], he put me on the day bed. He put a pillow under my back. I screamed. I was hurt and scared.

Then he let me up and gave me back my dime and gave me the milk. I was crying. My mother never sent me back there again.

.....

\_\_\_\_\_’s older brother did the same. His name was \_\_\_\_\_. We’d moved. We all lived in their little houses. Mother was the man and the woman. She was a sharecropper for 20 acres. Mother had rented his [the older brother’s] old home house. It was where he was born. He built a nicer house. It was a two-story house with steeples. He never married.

The old house we lived in was a log house. It had an upstairs, but it was old. Sometimes we’d climb up and look.

Ms. Sally was his [the older brother’s] housekeeper. She lived in a little house that was across from him. When my mother went to the field to work, sometimes I go to \_\_\_\_\_’s house with Ms. Sally and help her. One day I was there helping her, and he caught me by myself and took me to the inner room. I was twelve by then. It didn’t hurt so much that time. Then he smiled and said, “Be nice. What you gonna get mad for?” I hated him.

In talking about Ms. Sally, the woman commented that \_\_\_\_\_[the older brother] used to go to Ms. Sally’s house when Ms. Sally’s husband was gone [the tone implied his purpose in going there].

The researcher had not stopped the woman while she was talking steadily, but when there was a pause, the researcher asked two questions: “Did you tell your mother what happened when you were eleven years old and went home with the milk, crying because you’d been abused?” and “What did the sharecropper-husband of Ms. Sally do about the landowner’s unwelcome visits to his wife?”

The researcher's questions resulted in another one of those times when intelligent eyes bored into her, looking at her as if she weren't too bright, causing the researcher to explain that she couldn't write down what she thought, only what she was told. The answer was straightforward. "Nobody said or did anything—what could they do?" She explained that they worked for the man, and they lived in his houses on his property. If they said anything, they would lose their livelihood and their home.

One other comment made by the woman makes her testimony of the times even more poignant: The years during which she was raped at age 11 and age 12 and had no recourse were also the years of the onset of World II. Two of her brothers were overseas, in the Army, fighting for their country.

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**Marie Toney Harris [married John Harris] and Emma Ragland Harris [married Oregon Harris]. Their husbands were brothers.**



The Toney family (White) lived on land that was originally bought from the government by James Adair in 1818. It adjoined the land that Adair, Leroy Pope, and Dr. Fearn bought when they conceived the idea of bringing commerce to Huntsville by making the Big Spring Branch navigable by means of locks and dams, to the point at which it flowed into Indian Creek, and then to widen the stream to its mouth in Triana. Adair bought an adjoining 750-acre tract, and on a hill affording an expansive view of the surrounding area, built to serve as his dwelling, a two-room structure that was heavily braced with logs on the foundation and inner walls and with hand-sawed weatherboarding. Adair farmed the land, aided by 20 or more slaves. The land was sold to Richard Ireland Jones of Annapolis, Maryland, who in a year sold it to Henry Robertson of Lincoln County, Tennessee, who owned it six years then sold it to Daniel H. Tillinghast, who in 1837 sold it to Harris Toney.

When Harris Toney died in 1844, his cousin, Caleb, who was the administrator of the estate, purchased the property from Toney's widow. Caleb had been living with his cousin Harris and his wife since he had come from Virginia in 1836. According to Jones, Harris' daughter and her husband had a plantation two miles to the north of her parents; John, who never married; and Caleb, who married Lida Barkley, whose family had a nearby plantation. John had been Harris' only son old enough to serve in the Civil War. Shortly after safely returning from the war, he was killed while horse racing (Jones, 1932). Caleb died before building the larger home he'd planned for his family, but his widow carried on and built a new house. The family moved into it in 1859, at the beginning of the Civil War. This would have been the large house to which Dorothy Foster referred. Pat Jones described the Toney Home in an article in the December 4, 1932 issue of *The Huntsville Times*:

The new structure had six rooms, was T-shaped, and was made of yellow poplar throughout. Bricks for the chimneys, as well as the lumber of the

building, were obtained there on the place. Double doors set the house off in front, while immense windows were to be found on all sides.

On the interior, a hallway 10 feet wide, led to the rear with all the spaciousness characteristic of that time. A stair way of cherry wood led from a point near the door, half way upstairs to a landing that spanned the hall and then continued on to the top.

A wide brick wall coursed from the main doorway to the gate at the front of a large lawn. Huge oaks towered above it on each side, inviting someone to stretch a hammock between them and enjoy the breeze of an elevation that required bedcovering even during the hottest of Summer nights. Drinking water was obtained from two large cisterns at one side of the house.

This house was built only a few feet in front of the old one, but not so close the family could not live there until the job was completed. A partly filled hole now marks the site of the basement of this first structure.

The Army Real Estate Map identifying parcels of land with landowners at the time the Government procured the land reveals that the name “Toney” is listed for a number of parcels in the southwest area of the arsenal, bordering Triana.

### **Dorothy Harris Foster’s Mother’s Family**

Dorothy Foster said her mother’s family, the Rices (“a slave master name”) were poor. She was told they got water and lye from people her great grandmother worked for to clean the floors in the house they lived in as farm workers. Dorothy’s mother told her, “We were so hungry you’d get you a bucket and get all the scraps off the table [of the family they served].” Dorothy said her mother told her she had experienced this. Her maternal grandparents sharecropped on her fraternal grandfather’s land (William Harris II) on what is now Redstone Arsenal.

Dorothy Foster’s maternal grandmother, Henrietta Jackson Bibb, was born May 13, 1879 in Limestone County. Her mother was born in slavery. Henrietta and her husband, Tom Bibb, worked as sharecroppers with William Harris II. Henrietta died in June of 1963.



**Henrietta Jackson Bibb  
(1879-1963).**

Dorothy said, “She used to talk about the sinkholes—Bradford sinks. She said there was quicksand there. She used to fish in the sinkholes.” Dorothy added, “I still have her churn. She bought it when she was 19 years old and used it then.”

Dorothy said that through time, William Harris II acquired 200 acres (more or less) of land in Triana. However, she said “he probably lost interest in farming after his wife, Lou, and four of his children died of TB between 1918 and 1923. Several years after their deaths he lost his property to foreclosure.” Dorothy’s father, Oregon, redeemed all of the property William II lost to foreclosure and, after that acquisition, bought additional acres in Triana.



**Oregon Harris with Hiram Raney, who worked for him, in the background.**

## **PARCEL A-17: ELKO, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA RESEARCH, LAND HISTORY, AND THE CHANEY FAMILY WHO OWNED IT IN 1941**

This section is divided into six parts. The first part presents a description of the town of Elko, which was north of Parcel A-17. The second part describes the first major research project conducted on an unknown cemetery located on the property and gives a brief summary of the findings resulting from the analysis of the burials. The third part presents the history of land ownership. Since the early White settlers bought large parcels, the history of Parcel 17 is within the larger context of land ownership in the northwest corner of Redstone Arsenal.

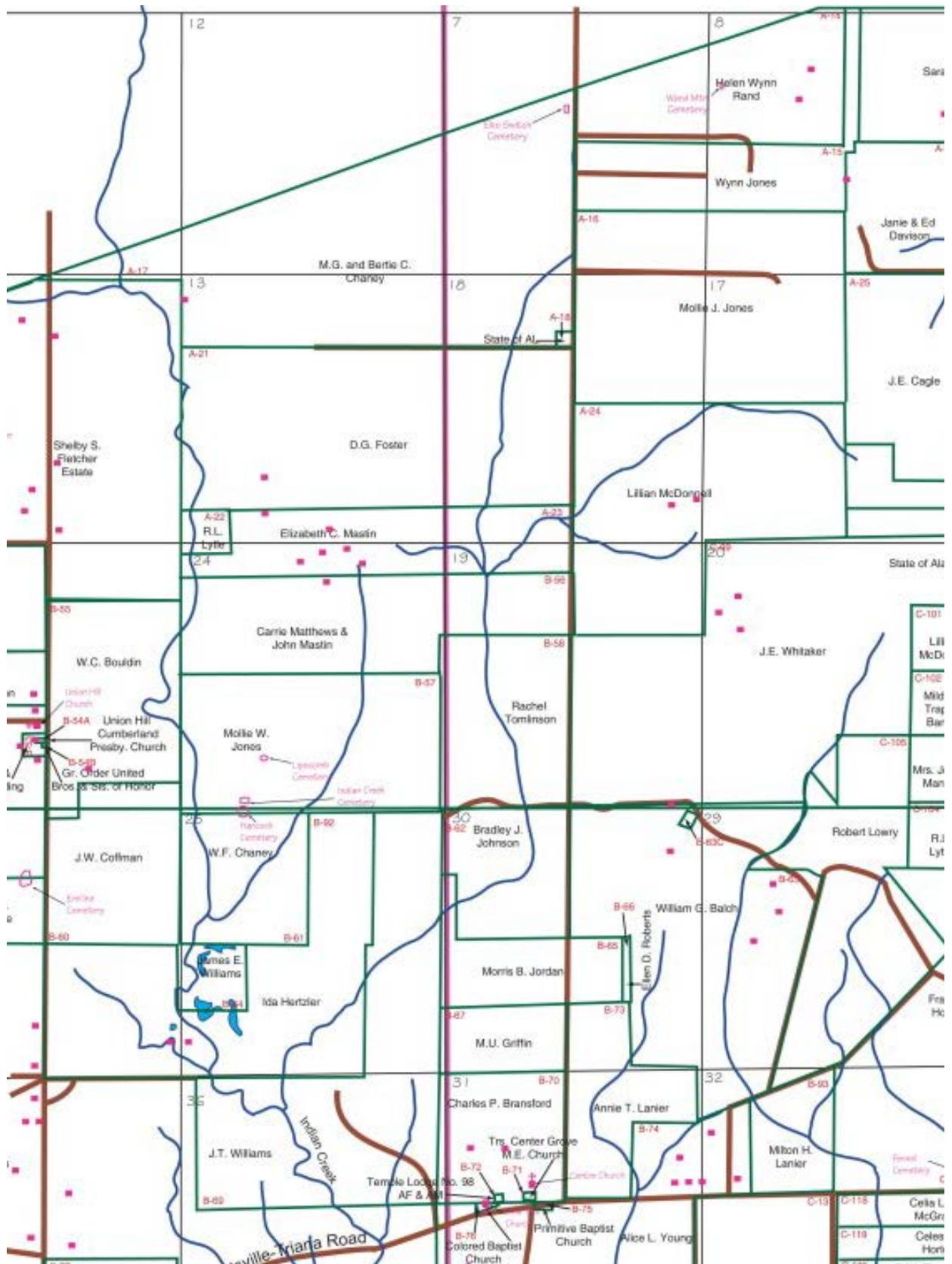
The fourth part presents the M.G. Chaney family and their lives on Parcel A-17; it is based on interviews with Chaney family members. Bernice Chaney lived on Parcel A-17 and later on Parcel B-61, which was purchased from M.G. Chaney by her father-in-law, Walter Chaney; therefore, Parcel B-61 is discussed in some detail as well. The fifth part introduces the McAnally family, tenants on the land of M.G. Chaney. The last part is a description of a cave that could be accessed from Parcel A-17; it was known since the days of Matthews land holding and was remembered by Bernice Chaney.

### **ELKO**

The town of Elko was not located on the land that is now Redstone Arsenal. In September of 2005, the researcher talked with Tom Kenny, editor of *Old Huntsville* magazine, who described the town. According to Kenny, the town of Elko consisted of about two dozen houses. Some of them had dirt floors and sliding boards for windows. Elko was a farming community. Kenny said a general store was on Old Madison Pike. It was operated first by the Slaughter family and then by the Tatum family. He said in the 1930's, two houses and a filling station, operated by W. J. Layne, were on the Pike.

Elko Depot was a Southern Railway stop. Passengers were picked up and dropped off. Freight, mostly farm merchandise and fertilizers, were dropped off at the depot, and cotton was shipped out. Many people who were interviewed by the researcher mentioned catching the train at Elko and fertilizer coming into the depot there. Due to its proximity to Elko, the nearest town, the Southern Railway switch on Parcel D-17 was known as the Elko switch.

The dirt road that ran north-south along the eastern boundary of Parcel A-17 was called Elko Road. Tom Kenny stated that the name "Old Elko Road" is found as a reference point in three Deed Books: Book 281, page 614; Deed Book 291, page 749; and Deed Book 361, page 250. When the post office established a mail route, Elko Road was designed Huntsville Free Delivery Road #5. Old Elko Road, once a dirt wagon road, is now the four-lane Rideout Road on Redstone Arsenal.



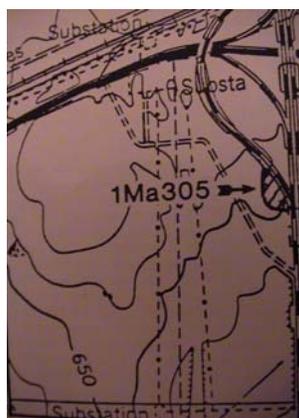
The M.G. Chaney parcel and W.F. Chaney parcel. Source: Map created for the Army by AAC.

## THE FIRST MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECT ON PARCEL A-17

Parcel A-17 and the history of its ownership became the subject of intense research in late 1987 when the Alabama Highway Department contracted the Office of Archaeological Research at The University of Alabama to evaluate the cultural impact of the proposed redesign of the interchange of Rideout Road and U.S. Alternate 72, now more commonly known as Highway 565.

Almost two decades earlier, in 1965, the Alabama Highway Department had inadvertently disturbed several unmarked graves during the construction of Rideout Road. The graves were located on the border between the southwest limits of the city of Huntsville and Redstone Arsenal. The work was halted. The soil was immediately replaced to an adequate depth to protect the remains impacted, and the highway was relocated 50 ft to the east of the burials.

When the Alabama Highway Department decided to redesign the interchange in 1987, the Office of Archaeological Research (OAR) was contracted first to conduct a preliminary archaeological survey to discern the area of the burials and then to remove the burials that were in the area of proposed impact. The cemetery was named Elko Switch Cemetery by the authors of the OAR project report (Shogren, Turner, and Perroni 1989) because it was near the switch of the Southern Railway located near Elko.



As a part of OAR's research design for removal of the cemetery (1Ma305), in-depth historic research was conducted in an effort to determine an association between the cemetery and past occupants of the land. The ownership of the land was traced through deed research, examination of countless other types of documents, and interviewing of elderly local residents. No record of a cemetery could be found, and none of the oldest people from the pre-arsenal community who were interviewed could recall seeing a cemetery there.

While Jody Perroni conducted the historic research, Michael Shogren supervised the excavation of the part of the cemetery that would be impacted. Fifty-six burials were excavated. All materials, including coffin hardware, found within the context of the burials were meticulously recorded and then analyzed in an effort to date the burials. Dr. Kenneth Turner, an osteologist from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alabama, who was known for his meticulous methods, analyzed the skeletal remains from the 56 burials. The details of the analyses are too lengthy to present here. The summation of the report said:

In summation, the socioeconomic structure of the community that utilized the Elko Switch Cemetery appears to be that of black freedmen and their descendants who earned their livelihood as tenant farmers and who lived a life not greatly improved from the days of slavery. The very real possibility of slave interments in the cemetery also exists with the

expected socioeconomic structure evident. At any rate, these were poor black farmers in a rural setting enduring many hardships and encountering many obstacles. (Shogren et al. 1989:50)

Information about the cemetery excavation on the Redstone Arsenal website suggests that the burials may have been moved from elsewhere. In reading the OAR report, that does not appear to have been asserted. The remains photographed appear as one would expect in an undisturbed burial, i.e., the faunal remains were not “mixed around” as they might be if they had been excavated, moved, and reinterred.

## **THE HISTORY OF LAND OWNERSHIP**

Perroni’s findings (Shogren et al. 1989) suggest that during the history of the land, few of the owners actually lived on it; however, it was assumed that the property was under cultivation and renters or tenants lived and worked on the land. Perroni found that (1) from 1850 to 1900 the majority of the people living in southwestern Madison County were Black, (2) the land in this part of the county was purchased by slaveholders, and (3) they bought large tracts of land. The ethnographic interviews and records research conducted by the researcher (Curry) concur with the findings of Perroni.

Jody C. Perroni’s research on the history of the land, of which Parcel A-17 was a part, was comprehensive. The document containing it is entitled *Elko Switch Cemetery: An Archaeological Perspective*, Alabama State Museum of Natural History, Division of Archaeology Report of Investigations 58 (Shogren, Turner and Perroni 1989). Perroni’s research begins with the early land grants for the area in 1808.

Early grants in Section 7, Township 4, Range 1 West were purchased by: David Maxwell, northeast quarter section, September 19, 1808; William Thompson, northwest and southwest quarter sections, September 8, 1809; and William Gray, southeast quarter section, August 26, 1808 (U.S. Government Tract Book, Madison County 1835:39).

William Thompson, and his wife, Henrietta owned the northwest and southwest quarters of Section 7, Township 4 South, Range 1 West for eleven years, until they sold both quarters to James Manning, Sr. in 1820 for \$8000 (Deed Record F:402). It is not known whether the Thompsons resided on this property during their ownership. It is likely that they did not. William Thompson purchased additional property north of the project area during the early land sales, and may have resided there (Coward n.d.:76).

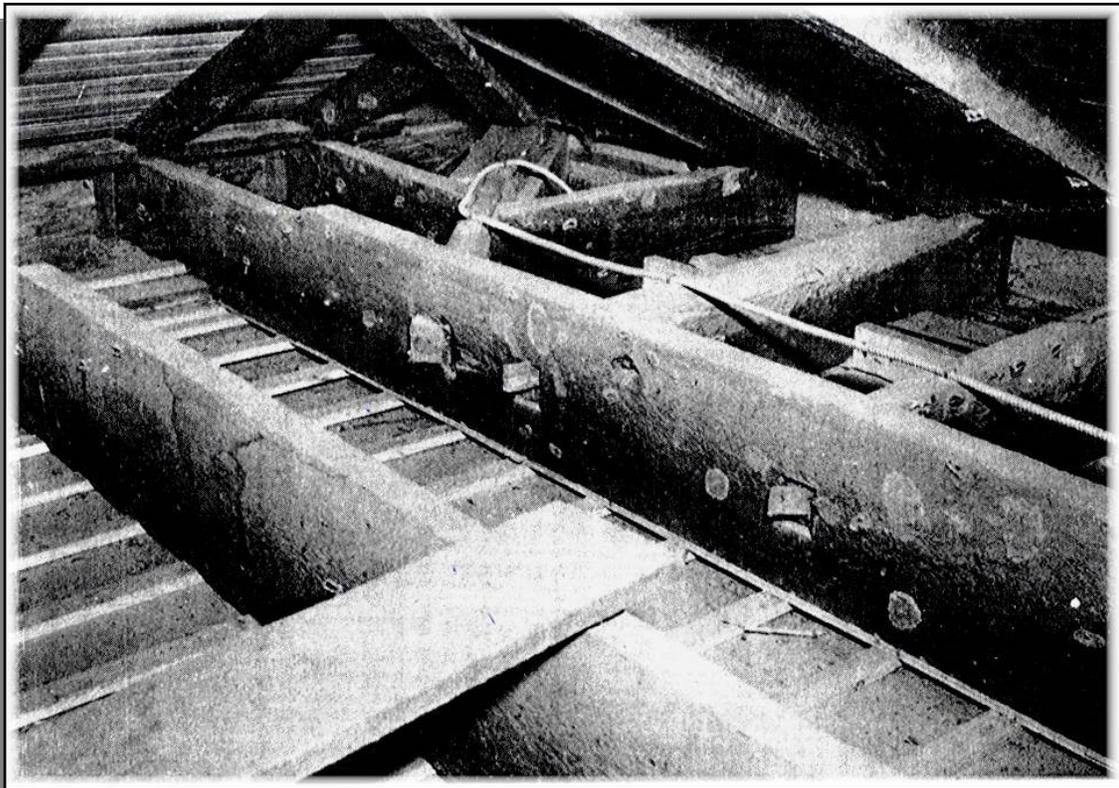
James Manning acquired approximately 2200 acres near the project area [Elko Switch Cemetery] between 1809 and 1836. He owned portions of Sections 7, 8, 17, and 18 in Township 4 South, Range 1 West and parts of

Sections 11, 12, and 13 in Township 4 South, Range 2 West (Government Tract Book 1:39, 42, 100; Cowart n.d.:26-28, 76-77).

(Shogren et al. 1989:231)

Perroni suggests that since records indicate Manning was in the mercantile business and was a wealthy planter, he may have built a large two-story residence on his plantation. The consensus of local historians is that Manning built the large two-story house that was on Parcel A-17. Perroni said no evidence was found that Manning lived in the house.

The house is estimated to have been built in 1835 based on architectural style, wooden peg construction of the ceiling beams, and other construction techniques. Therefore, Manning, the owner during that period of time, is believed to have built the house. The picture shows the pegged ceiling beams in the attic of the house.



**Pegged ceiling beams of house believed to have been built by James Manning in 1835.**  
Source: *The Redstone Rocket*, January 3, 1956.

James Manning owned the property for seventeen years, and then:

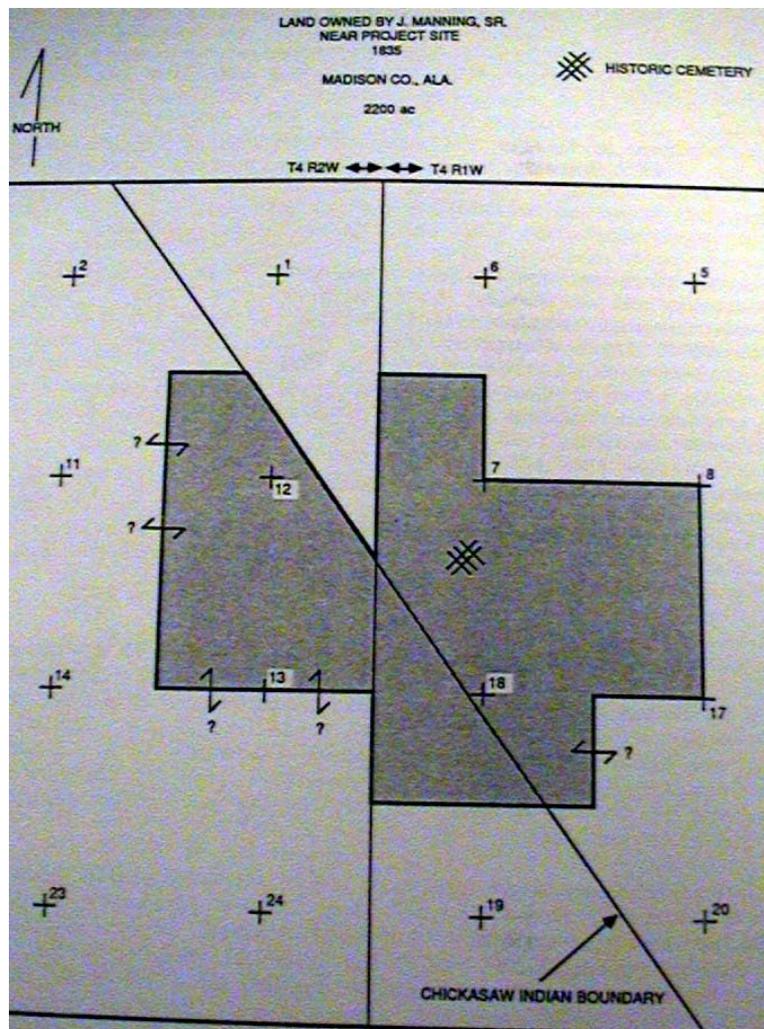
. . . on 3 August 1837, he and his wife Sophia, deeded 2,138 acres, “together with all privileges and appurtenances to the said land in any [way] appertaining or belonging all the houses, hogs, sheep, cattle, mules, tools, furniture provisions. . .” and fifty-three slaves, to their sons George and Peyton Manning (Deed Record Q:361). It is likely that George and Peyton Manning continued to use the land as a plantation. They acquired the fractional Section 12, Township 4 South, Range 2 West (east of the Indian boundary), containing 218 acres from Richard Holding on 11 April 1838 for the sum of \$5,000 (Deed Record R:12). (Shogren et al. 1987:234)

The fractional section George added to the property was about a half mile due east of where the Elko Switch Cemetery is located. Holding bought the land from John Withers who bought it from the U.S. Government in 1809. When Holding sold the land to George and Peyton Manning, the deed from Holding stated that the fractional section 12 contained “two hundred eighteen acres, more or less except about one quarter of an acre being the family burying ground of the late John Withers, deceased” (Deed Record R:12).

A half-mile due east of where the Elko Switch Cemetery is mapped would put the cemetery on what was Parcel A-14 on the Army Real Estate Map. That parcel was owned by Helen Wynn Rand at the time of sale to the Army. The location would coincide with the cemetery the Army has named the Ward Mountain Cemetery.

Perroni states (Shogren et al. 1989:234) that six years

after Holding sold the land to George and Peyton Manning, February 18, 1843, a deed of trust was drawn between George and Peyton Manning and Benjamin T.



**OAR Project Map. Land owned near Elko by J. Manning, Sr. in 1835 (Shogren et al. 1989).**



Perroni said that written in the margin of Deed Record T:531 is a statement that declares the indenture was satisfied on March 28, 1844, and all slaves were released except seven. They were shown as “Moody, his wife Nancy, Coleman, Little Moody, Litha, Nelson, and Mary.”

Perroni continues the record of the landowners:

On February 1844, one month prior to the recording of the release indenture, George and Peyton Manning sold 1,360 acres of the land east and south, southeast, and southwest of the project area [Elko Switch Cemetery] (project site inclusive), to Bartley M. Lowe for \$14,000 (Deed Record U:230).

In addition to the land conveyed to Bartley Lowe from James Manning in 1836 (Deed Record Q:121), and property conveyed by William Gray to Bartley Lowe in 1838 (Deed Record R:55), Bartley Lowe owned approximately 2,100 acres near the project area [Elko Switch Cemetery].

Bartley M. Lowe was a very wealthy and prominent citizen of Huntsville during 1820-1850, acquiring much of his wealth from cotton manufacturing (Lowe Manufacturing Co.). He was exceedingly popular and was elected Major-General of the militia during 1820-1830. Bartley M. Lowe married a daughter of James and Sophia Manning (Taylor 1976:78). He was born in South Carolina and died 24 June 1967.

Records indicate that Bartley Lowe owned approximately 130 slaves in 1840 (Deed Record V:273). It is likely that many of the descendants of these slaves remained in the project area working as farm laborers.

On 13 May 1845 B. Lowe sold approximately 1,633 acres to Thomas W. White for \$12,865. This sale included the same land conveyed to Bartley Lowe by George and Peyton Manning (8 February 1844), and also the northeast quarter of Section 19, Township 4 South, Range 1 West (a tract formerly owned and occupied by Young Scruggs), both parcels having been conveyed by William McDonnell, Benjamin Patterson, and William Weeden on 7 November 1837.

Thomas W. White is a descendant of James White, for whom the town of Whitesburg, Madison County, Alabama was named. He immigrated to Madison County from Virginia in the early 1810s. Thomas White married Susan Withers White of Madison County. Records indicate Thomas and his wife, Susan Withers White, lived in Huntsville’s Third Ward. Thomas W. White died on 30 May 1890, age 72, and his wife, Susan Withers White, age 47, passed away on 12 January 1893.

Thomas White owned this tract for only 8 days before selling it to Luke Matthews, of Limestone County, on 20 May 1845 for \$12,900 (Deed Record V:255) (the whole being the tract of lands sold to White by Lowe Deed Record V:247).

Luke Matthews owned approximately 10,000 acres in Madison County, and became one of the county's most prominent planters (Richard Mathews, personal interview, March 1988, Goldsmith 1985:133). Luke Matthews was born in Campbell County, Virginia on 10 September 1796. He settled in Limestone County, Alabama in 1824. He married Miss Judith E. Peete, also of Campbell County, Virginia, on March 1826 and by her had 8 children. His first wife died and on 26 January 1843 he married Miss Lucy Ann Spotswood by whom he had 8 children. He moved to Madison County from Limestone County in 1846.

Luke Matthews acquired approximately 3000 acres north, south and west of the project area [Elko Switch Cemetery] and called it Oakendale Plantation (Deed Record VV:504). It is not known whether or not he resided on this plantation (possibly the Goddard House).

(Shogren et al. 1989:235, 238)

The Goddard House referred to above is the name given by the Army in later years to the plantation "big house" located on Parcel A-17 thought to be built by Manning and owned by Chaney at the time of land sale to the Army.

Luke Matthews cannot be placed directly as living in the plantation house on Parcel A-17. However, an extract from the 1860 census shows Luke Matthews in the southwestern part of the county. He was head of a household of 15 people; the people listed in neighboring households are known to have lived in the immediate area of the plantation. By 1870, the census lists him living in Huntsville's third ward. His occupation is listed as farmer. The value of his real estate and personal property is estimated at \$66,200. Luke Matthews' daughter Marie married into the Erskine family.

Jewell S. Goldsmith and Helen D. Fulton, local Huntsville residents, in their book, *Medicine Bags and Bumpy Roads* (1985:133-134) provide an overview of Albert Erskine and his family. From it, we learn that Albert, Luke Matthews' son-in-law, was born on January 17, 1827 in Huntsville. He attended Georgetown College in Washington, D.C. and then to West Point Military Academy. Albert didn't care for the military. He studied under his father, and then at the University of Virginia. Following that he studied at the University of Pennsylvania where he received a Doctor of Medicine degree in 1851.

Immediately after receiving his degree, Dr. Albert Erskine returned to Huntsville where he went into practice, and four years after that married Maria. Albert may not have wanted to be a soldier when he was at West Point, but he entered the Confederate Army in 1862 and served in the 5<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Regular Infantry as a surgeon and medical inspector. Returning from the war, he was very active in professional activities and a



While Luke Matthews himself was said to be one of the richest planters in Madison County, the marriage of his daughter Maria into the Erskine family was, indeed, a combining of wealth and social status. That said, the discussion of land ownership as presented in Shogren, Perroni, and Turner (1989) will continue:

In 1850, Luke Matthews had a total of 71 slaves: 26 female and 45 males; 26 males, age 15 and younger and 12 females, age 15 and younger (U.S. Census Bureau of the Census, Slave Schedules 1850:Roll 21). The majority of these slaves must have lived at Oakendale Plantation, while a few worked as domestic servants. It is possible that these slaves and their freed descendants were later buried in the project area cemetery [Elko Switch Cemetery]. An extract from the 1870 census enumerates many black families living in Section 7, Township 4 South, Range 1 West (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870:25).

Luke Matthews was a soldier in the War of 1812 and died in Huntsville 1 August 1875. Luke Matthews, his second wife, and their descendants are buried in Maple Hill Cemetery, Huntsville, Alabama (Dorothy S. Johnson, personal correspondence, 1987).

In 1872, Luke and Lucy deeded four properties (approximately 600 to 700 acres each) of Oakendale Plantation to three of his sons and four of his grandchildren (children of John N. Matthews, his oldest son by Lucy A. Spotwood). James P. Matthews was deeded 700 acres of Oakendale, which included the site of the historic cemetery [Elko Switch].

James P. Matthews was the third son of Luke and Lucy Matthews. He was born in Madison County, Alabama on 19 March 1847 and died 16 April 1908 (Dorothy S. Johnson, personal correspondence 1987); Register of Deaths, Madison County, 1881-1912). His wife, Lucy Bierne Matthews, died 11 June 1900. (Shogren et al. 1989:238)

As was typical of the times, the deed from Luke and Lucy Matthews conveyed it to James P. Matthews using the measure of metes and bounds.

. . . more particularly described as being seven hundred (700) acres of that portion of the Oakendale Plantation of said Luke Matthews lying south of the Memphis and Charleston Rail Road tract which is embraced in the following boundaries to wit: on the north side by Rail Road track [,] on the East by the lands of the late Samuel Ward, on the west of the lands of the late Richard Holding and on the south by a line, running parallel with the said Rail Road track and running from the East to the West boundary of said Oakendale Plantation, To have and to hold the said tract of land, Seven Hundred acres, together with the dwelling and houses situated on the same . . . (Deed Records VV:505). (Shogren et al. 1989:240)

**[This parcel fits the description of Parcel A-17 that was purchased by the Army from M.G. Chaney.]**

Perroni (Shogren et al. 1989:240) states that records indicate James P. Matthews and his wife did not live on this property but southwest of the property on land owned by Lucy Matthews. She notes the 1880 Madison County census enumerates many Black families living in the area; many of the Black families were named Holding.

In 1892, the 700-acre parcel left the ownership of the Matthews family when it was sold to Elizabeth Davis. The deed description:

All of the West half (W ½) of Southwest quarter (SW ¼) of Section seven (7), South of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad; also the North part of the Northwest quarter (NW ¼) of Section 18, all in Township four (4), Range one (1) West,--also all of the South half (S ½) of Section twelve (12), South of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad; also the North part of the Northeast quarter (NE ¼) and the North part of the Northwest quarter (NW ¼) of Section thirteen (13) and that part of Southeast quarter (SE ¼) of Section eleven (11) East of Indian Creek, and south of Memphis and Charleston Railroad, all in Township four (4), Range two (2) West—said land being described by limits and bounds as follows:

Beginning at intersection of quarter section line, running South through center Section seven (7), with South (south) boundary of Memphis & Charleston railroad, thence South on quarter section line seventy-eight (78) chains sixty (60) links to a stake on said quarter section line in Section eighteen (18), thence Westwardly and parallel with Section lines through sections twelve (12) and thirteen (13) one hundred and twenty (120) chains to West boundary of Section thirteen (13) thence North on Section line twenty (20) chains to Northwest corner of said Section, thence West on Section line eighteen (18) chains and fifty (50) lines to Indian Creek, then up said creek as it meanders to Bridge on Memphis & Charleston R.R., thence with said railroad North 74 1/4 , degrees East one hundred forty-eight and 90/100 chains to beginning and containing seven hundred (700) acres, more or less (Deed Record WW:212-13).

(Shogren et al. 1989:240-241)

Perroni noted one discrepancy in this. The metes and bounds description includes the entire southwest quarter of Section 7.

The next owner of Parcel 17-A was Elizabeth Davis, who owned it until her death in 1896. Her will indicates she suffered a long illness beginning in 1893. She may have been living with her son, Loundes H. Davis, to whom she bequeathed the 700-acre parcel she owned (Probate Case #4416, Probate Minute 24:347360). He and his wife, Mary B. Davis, had two sons, Clarendon and Paul.

Shogren et al. (1989:241) state that Loundes and Mary Davis deeded a strip of land 100 feet wide containing 22.23 acres (Deed Record 114:580) to Alabama Property Company.

The Alabama Property Company deeded the same strip of land to Alabama Power Company for the use of construction of electric transmission lines (Deed Record 116:164).

Shogren et al. 1989:242) state that Loundes H. Davis, and his wife Mary retained the 700 acres, known as the Homestead Plantation of Loundes H. Davis, until Loundes' death on or about 4 February 1920. This is essentially correct. The deed stated that they purchased 700 acres, excepting a reserved the strip totaling 22.23 acres sold to the Alabama Property Company. At the time of his death, Loundes H. Davis resided at 300 Madison St., Huntsville (Huntsville City Directory 1920-21, Vol. VIII).

On March 9, 1920, in the matter of the estate of Loundes H. Davis, Clarendon Davis, son of Loundes and Mary Davis, filed a petition to probate and admit the true last will and testament of L. H. Davis (Probate Case No. 6641, Probate Minute 34:235). The will, however, was contested by the widow of Paul Davis, Sr., deceased, daughter-in-law of Loundes H. Davis (Probate Minute 34:243). On May 8 1920, the Court made and entered the record that the "said instrument is not the valid last will and testament of said Loundes H. Davis, and that at the time of the date thereof, and of said codicil, he [Loundes] was mentally incompetent of executing a valid will" (Probate Minute 34:268).

(Shogren et al. 1989:242)

Clarendon Davis filed a counter petition on May 12, 1920 that showed Loundes H. Davis died intestate. The entirety of his estate was estimated to be worth about \$110,000. The names of heirs and distributees named in the petition were Mary Bell Davis, widow of Loundes H. Davis; Clarendon Davis, son; and Paul Davis, Jr., grandson, with Edna R. Davis being appointed guardian of Paul Davis, jr., who was a minor. Clarendon Davis was named to be the administrator of the estate (Probate Minute 34:274).

On May 28 May 1920, Clarendon Davis filed his original bill in the Circuit Court of Madison County, Alabama (Case No. 1041). Shogren et al. summarize this:

. . . the complainant [Clarendon Davis] prays your Honor to make Paul Davis, Kate Mastin Davis [wife of Clarendon Davis], Mary Bell Davis, and Edna R. Davis, as guardian of the estate of said Paul Davis, Jr., a minor, parties defendant hereto and that for such Davis to buy said lands [677.67 acres] be accepted, and that upon the payment by her to the Register of this court of the sum of fifty-seven thousand six hundred one and 95/100 (\$57,601.95) dollars, that all the right, title, claim, interest, and estate in and to said lands held by the Complainant individual claim, interest and estate in and to said lands held by the Complainant individually and as administrator of the estate of the said Lowndes H. Davis, deceased, and all the right, title, claim interest and estate, held in and to said lands by the defendant Paul Davis, Jr. and the defendant Mary Bell Davis, and the defendant Edna R. Davis, as the guardian of the estate

of the said Paul Davis, Jr., a minor, be vested absolutely in the defendant, Kate Mastin Davis, and that the Register of the Court be directed to execute and deliver to the said Kate Mastin Davis, a deed conveying to her all of such interest and that the sale be ratified and confirmed; . . . (Probate Record 4:283). (Shogren et al. 1989:242)

On July 21, 1920, the court entered to record the following decree:

It is therefore ordered, adjudged and decreed by the Court that the complainant is entitled to relief prayed for in the bill of complaint. And it further appearing to the Court that it is for the best interest of Paul Davis, a minor defendant as well as the complainant Clarendon Davis, and the defendant Mary Bell Davis, that the sale of the lands (677.67) acres more or less, and being known as the Homestead Plantation of the said Loundes H. Davis, described in said bill, to the defendant Kate Mastin-Davis be ratified and confirmed (Probate Record 4:288). (Shogren et al. 1989:243)

Shogren et al. (1989) explain that the homestead exemption and dower interest of Mary Bell Davis, widow of Loundes H. Davis were determined by the register of the court to be \$2000 for the homestead exemption and \$4,776.31 for the dower interest. On January 21, 1921, the Register of the Court entered to record and ordered and decreed that Mary Bell Davis be paid the total of \$6776.31 from the proceeds derived from the sale of the land. The court further ordered, judged and decreed that after this was paid, and the cost of the court proceedings were paid, the remainder of the money from the sale should be divided into two equal parts, one part to be paid to the Complainant, Clarendon Davis and the other to Edna R. Davis, as guardian of the estate of Paul Davis, Jr. (Probate Record 4:288).

Shogren et al. (1989:243) state that Kate Mastin Davis received the deed conveying the 677.67 acres of Homestead Plantation to her on April 19, 1921 for the amount of \$57,601.95 (Deed Record 125:431). She immediately conveyed the land to her husband, Clarendon Davis, in a quitclaim deed for \$100 (Deed Record 125:431). She and her husband did not reside at Homestead Plantation. Clarendon was the President of Huntsville Bank and Trust, and he and Kate lived in Chevey Chase on Meridian Pike (the 1920-21 Huntsville City Directory, Vol. VIII). Even though they did not live at Homestead Plantation, they maintained ownership for three years until they sold it to M.G. and Bertie Chaney.

This brings us to the sale of the property from Kate and Clarendon Davis to M.G. Chaney. M. G. Chaney and Bertie Chaney purchased parcel shown as A-17 on the Army Real Estate Map on November 14, 1924, for the amount of \$34,000 (Deed Book 131:63). M.G. and Bertie Chaney maintained ownership of the parcel, with the exception of two acres donated for the construction of a school, until the War Department notified them the land must be sold.

CLARENDON DAVIS  
KATE M DAVIS  
TO DEED  
M G CHANEY

Mad. Co. AL  
Deed Book 131  
Page 63

STATE OF ALABAMA  
MADISON COUNTY

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that the undersigned Clarendon Davis and Kate M Davis his wife, for and in consideration of the sum of Thirty-four thousand four hundred Dollars (\$34,400.00) cash in hand paid to them by M G Chaney, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, and the further consideration of the promise of the said M G Chaney to pay the said sum of fifteen thousand six hundred Dollars (\$15,600.00) to the Chickamauga Trust Company, according to the terms of a mortgage executed by Clarendon Davis and wife to the said Chickamauga Trust Company conveying the lands hereinafter described, and recorded in mortgage Book 178, page 63 in the office of the Probate Judge of said State and County, do hereby grant, bargain, sell and convey to the said M G Chaney the following described real estate lying and being in Madison County, Alabama, to-wit:

Beginning at the intersection of the quarter section line, running North and South through Section Seven (7) Township Four (4) Range one (1) West, with the South line of the right of way of the Southern Railway, thence South along the said quarter section line Seventy-eight and sixty hundredths (78.60) chains thence West parallel with the North line of Section eighteen (18), Township four (4) Range One (1) West, and parallel with the North line of section thirteen (13) Township four (4) Range two (2) West, to the west line of said Section thirteen (13) thence North on the section line twenty (20) chains to the Northwest corner of said section thirteen (13) thence West on the South line of Section eleven (11), Township Four (4) Range two (2) West, eighteen and fifty hundredths (18.50) chains to Indian Creek thence up said creek to the South line of the right of way on the Southern Railroad, thence North seventy-four and one fourth (74 $\frac{1}{4}$ ) degrees East along the Southern margin of said railroad right of way, one hundred and forty-eight and ninety hundredths (148.90) chains to the beginning, containing seven hundred acres (700) excepting and reserving therefrom a one hundred (100) foot strip taken evenly off the North end thereof heretofore sold to the Alabama, Power Company.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD to the said M G Chaney his heirs and assigns forever. And the said Clarendon Davis does hereby warrant and covenant with the said M G Chaney that he, the said Clarendon Davis, is lawfully seized in fee simple of the above described premises; that he has a good and lawful right to sell and convey the same as aforesaid; that the same are free from all liens and encumbrances except the mortgage to the Chickamauga Trust Company hereinabove referred to; and that he will forever warrant the title thereto and the possession thereof from and against any and all persons except those claiming under the said mortgage of the Chickamauga Trust Company.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said Clarendon Davis and Kate M Davis his wife, have hereunto set their hands and seals this 14th day of November, 1924.

Clarendon Davis (SEAL)

Kate M Davis (SEAL)

STATE OF ALABAMA MADISON COUNTY

I Kathleen C Guthrie a Notary Public, in and for said State and County, do hereby certify that Clarendon Davis and Kate M Davis his wife, whose names are signed to the foregoing conveyance, and who are known to me, acknowledge before me on this day, that, being informed of the contents of the conveyance, they executed the same voluntarily on the day the same bears date. Given under my hand this the 14 day of November, 1924.

Kathleen C Guthrie NOTARY PUBLIC

STATE OF ALABAMA MADISON COUNTY

I Kathleen C Guthrie a Notary Public in and for said State and County, do hereby certify that on the 14th day of November, 1924, came before me the within named Kate M Davis, who, is known to me to be the wife of the within named Clarendon Davis who, being examined separate and apart from her husband, touching her signature to the within conveyance, acknowledged that she signed the same of her own free will and accord and without fear, constraints, or threats on the part of her husband. In witness whereof, I hereunto set my hand this 14th day of November, 1924.

Kathleen C Guthrie NOTARY PUBLIC

Deed of sale, Clarendon and Kate Davis to M.G. and Bertie Chaney (1924).



### **THE HOUSE THAT WAS ON PARCEL A-17**

**The construction of this house is said to date to 1835, based its architectural style, wooden peg construction of the ceiling beams, and other construction techniques. In 1835, James and Sophia Manning owned 2,200 acres of land that included the land on which this house was built. Therefore, it has been speculated that James Manning built the house so it has been referred to as the Manning House.**

**During the land ownership of Luke and Lucy Matthews, and then James P. Matthews, the house was part of Oakendale Plantation.**

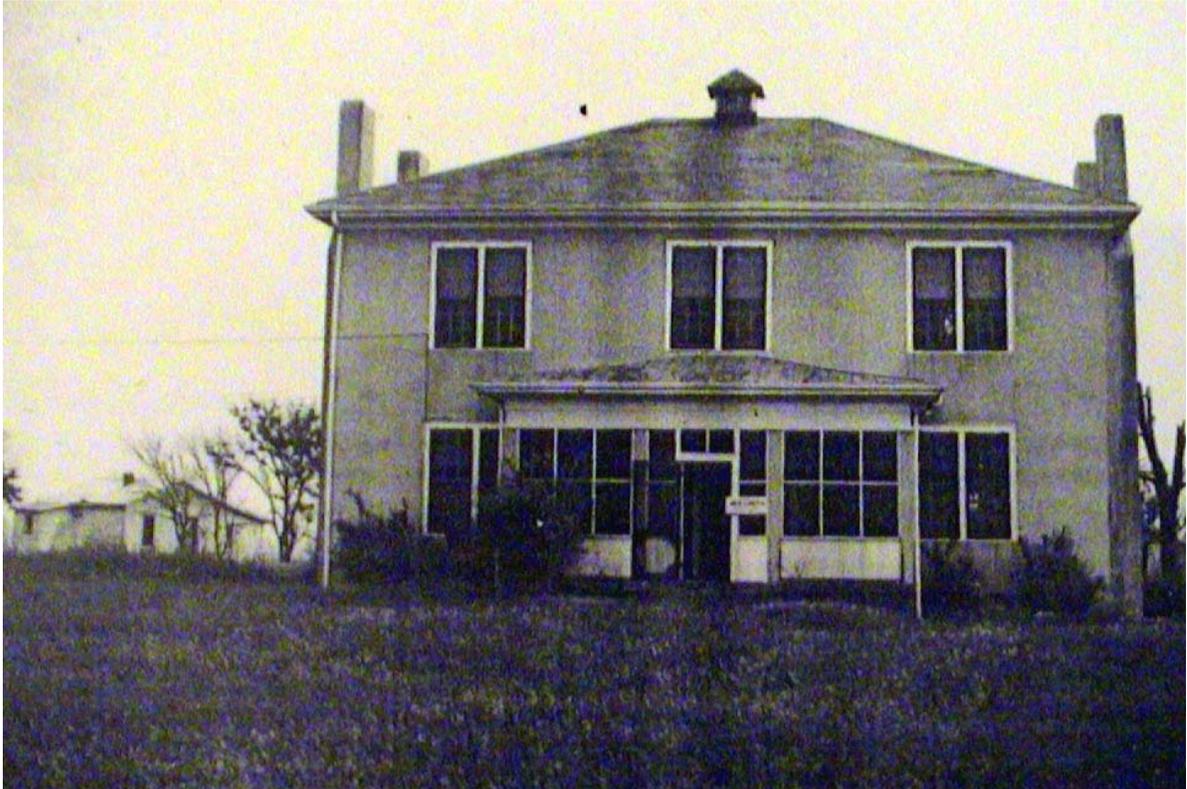
**When Loundes H. Davis was bequeathed the 700-acre parcel by his mother, Elizabeth, the property was known, until Loundes Davis' death as the Homestead Plantation.**

**M.G. Chaney lived with his family in the house from 1924 to 1941. Former residents of the pre-arsenal communities remember M.G. Chaney. They refer to Chaney's land and the Chaney House.**

**In 1956, the Army changed the name of the house and its location. It is now on Redstone Road, and it is the Goddard House. The U.S. Army named the house in honor of Dr. Robert Goddard, the "Father of American Rocketry."**

**The name Chaney House will be used in this document.**

Since becoming the Goddard House, the house has undergone extensive remodeling, resulting in the removal of the back staircase, fireplaces, the four identical chimneys (one on each corner), and other significant changes. Bernice Chaney, whose late husband was the nephew of M.G. Chaney, visited the house with the researcher on July 27, 2005. A feature Bernice Chaney recognized when she visited the house was the one remaining fireplace, which had been faced in pink marble.



**The Chaney House on Parcel A-17 had a stucco exterior and a chimney on each corner. Notice the structure behind the house to the left. Source: *The Redstone Rocket*, October 25, 1989, p. 10.**



***House on the move on Patton Road at Huntsville Spring Branch***

The Chaney House on the move in 1956 . Source: *The Redstone Rocket*, January 3, 1956.



**The Chaney House became the Goddard House on Redstone Road.**

## **THE CHANEY FAMILY**

Bernice Elkins Chaney, Interviews May, June, and July 2005

Mac Chaney, 30 May 05

Hosea Chaney, 9 June 05

This section presents Bernice Chaney's remembrances of: (1) life on her parents farm, which was to the north of M.G. Chaney's land, (2) her marriage to Frank Chaney, (3) M.G. Chaney and his family, (4) she and her husband as newlyweds sharecropping on M.G.'s land (A-17), (5) other tenants on M.G.'s land, and (6) her life on Parcel A-61. M.G. sold Parcel A-61 to his brother, Walter Chaney, for a dollar. Walter and his family, including his son Frank and daughter-in-law Bernice, moved to Walter's land and lived there until 1941. Mac Chaney, who has also contributed to this section, is the son of Bernice and Frank; he was born on Parcel A-61.

The Chaney family members interviewed remember M.G. Chaney having four tenant houses on Parcel A-17. At one point, his son who helped to manage the farm lived in the one closest to the big house. Chaney furnished his tenants with a house, a garden plot, and coal.

## **BERNICE ELKINS CHANEY**

### **The Elkins Family**

The Elkins family lived just north of M.G. Chaney, on the other side the Pike, so the farm where they lived was just outside the boundary of the land that would be acquired by the War Department. Bernice Elkins and Frank Chaney were neighbors. Since the cultural context of the rural setting does not end where the sale of property begins, the memories Bernice related about her life when she was living with her parents are presented.

Bernice said:

My family lived up on the hill. There was a store in somebody's house. It belonged to the Butlers. It was a room in the house that had groceries in it. The store had meal, flour, coffee, and canned stuff. Mostly you grew your own food. Back then you'd take green beans and fatback or streaked lean, just a little water, and cook the beans down to grease. Some people put in Irish potatoes. Put a lid on it, and it would boil down right quick. We didn't have much money then.

I found a half dollar one day. I went to that store and bought five pounds of sugar, a can of mackerel and five pounds of pinto beans. Mackerel was cheaper than salmon. That was 67 years ago. I still remember finding that half dollar.

My brother and me turned land with a big turning plow. Once when we were doing that, my brother took a chew of tobacco and gave me one, and I got so sick! I never did that again.

My daddy was a molasses maker. My brothers worked all day for a gallon of molasses—not over 25 cents a gallon. We made it for ourselves. We didn't sell it. When you had your cane, you first stripped off all the blades. Then you cut it down and laid it in piles. You'd go along and cut the heads off. Then load it on a wagon [pulled by a team of mules]. The mules were pulling, and it would go round and round.

[How did that work?] Two big wheels met. You put the sugar between the two big wheels and mash the juice out. It would go in the molasses pan. You'd take a paddle and work it from that place to another until you got to the end of the pan. It was a long pan with several trays. Work it back and forth. When you get to the end of the pan, be ready to pour it up. It'd be boiling hot. The long pan had a stopper. You'd take the stopper out and it would pour into a 50-pound lard stand, like a bucket, a galvanized stand. From there, we dipped it into gallon buckets. We'd grow the cane. We made it for ourselves.

We'd have to carry water a mile. Pappa would whistle all the way. He'd carry water, too. When you got to the well, you'd draw the water with a long pipe and a rope.

That was the hardest job I ever done. You'd be burning up, stripping and cutting. The second hardest was cutting firewood. The third was turning land with two mules and a turning plow, and I weighed 98 pounds.

The men would go to the fields and I'd stay home long enough to fix lunch. [What did you fix?] Potatoes and green beans, slaw. Mostly oil and vinegar with the slaw.

### **Marriage to Frank Chaney**

Bernice was a young bride when she went with her husband, Frank Chaney, the son of M.G.'s brother Walter, to live in a tenant house on M.G.'s land. She remembers her Aunt Bertie and Uncle Mabren (M.G.) well. She said with the warmth brought by a good memory in her eyes, "Uncle Mabren loved me and treated me like a daughter."

### **M.G. Chaney and His Family** (Sources: Mac Chaney and Hosea Chaney)

Bertie Pitchford Chaney, wife of Mabren G. (M.G.) Chaney, was born in Alabama in 1892. Both Bernice and Hosea Chaney described Bertie as having a dark complexion and dark hair and the appearance of being an Indian. Mac Chaney said a genealogy

researcher in Atlanta traced the Pitchford family back into France where they were mentioned as crossing to Britain during the Norman Invasion.

Mabren was born in Alabama in 1890. He had dark hair and eyes. He liked to smoke a cigar. At first Bernice could not remember him working, but later she remembered that earlier in his life he'd been a photographer and had owned a studio near Morgan City. The first photos he took were tintypes. He owned a dry goods store in Huntsville. Emma Horton Langford (see interview) said her family sent to the Fowler and Chaney Store to buy dry goods.

Mac Chaney said:

Once around 1950 Uncle Mabren brought us home from Huntsville to Brownsboro. He got to the road that turned off Highway 72 East, where Madison County High School now sits, when we told him to turn left. Now, Uncle Mabren was advanced in years by our standards and was about ready for the pine box. Overweight and smoking a big and stinking cigar, he drove a big Cadillac. There were no ditches along the cotton fields. However, the intersection had wide, grassy shoulders. Uncle Mabren missed the road by about ten feet and kept going until he got back on the road. He grumped out an, "Oomph," straightened up and drove us on home to Brownsboro Road.

M.G. got rich by buying land when it was cheap. He also gambled. Hosea said: "He went down to Cotton Row behind Big Spring where they bid on cotton. M.G. won some and lost some. He had ample money, so when he lost, he took it in stride."

Hosea said one of the parcels of land M.G. lost in a card game was the place where he was born. In earlier years, Hosea's father had managed that land. It is located where what is now called Johnson Road intersects with Triana Boulevard. This area was called Chelsey—it was across from Chaney Grove.

In remembering Chaney Grove, Hosea said he went to Joe Davis School, in the mill area on Triana. Hosea recalled action by himself and two other boys that he said would have had them arrested in today's day and age. Hosea explained. The teacher at Joe Davis said in class (undoubtedly science class) that she wished she had a skeleton. Since their teacher wanted a skeleton, Hosea, his brother Mac, and another boy went "down below" Johnson Road and dug up one. Forty or fifty years ago, there was a grocery store there in Chelsey, across from Chaney Grove. The boys got the skeleton as far as the grocery store. Hosea said they were pretty tired, and they didn't get it any further. The adults took over. They were made to take the skeleton back to the cemetery and bury it in its resting place.



**M.G. and his brother Walter Chaney. A painting made of a still photo taken by M.G. in his studio in Attalla, Alabama in 1912. Everyone who remembers M.G. says he liked to play dominoes. (Source: Hosea Chaney allowed the researcher to photograph the painting, which is displayed in his home.)**

## Living on the Chaney Place

**Where We Lived.** Bernice Chaney, who is 85 years old [in 2006], said she remembers the M.G. Chaney property “from when I was around 18 years old.” When she and Frank Chaney married, they began married life living in one of the tenant houses. She said:

Uncle Mabren and Aunt Bertie lived in the big house. When we lived on their place, I’d go cook for them. Aunt Bertie loved my egg custard. They had somebody come to do their washing. Uncle Mabren loved to play dominoes.

Bernice said the big stucco house faced south and was not far from the road. The road was dirt and it connected to Old Madison Pike, which was the old road to Madison before the four-lane was built. The barn was behind the house, somewhat, to the northwest. M.G. also owned land on the north side of the road. It was not part of the Army acquisition. She said M.G. also owned land in other areas of Madison County and nearby counties.

Bernice remembers four houses south of the big house. One was larger and better than the others were. “Son” Chaney, who oversaw the property for his father, inhabited the largest of the four houses [for a time]. Bernice said:

There was one better house, which was where Son and his wife Opal lived. He was called Son, and I think that was his name. When they left there, they went to California. The house had two bedrooms and a living room and a kitchen. Son was the overseer of the place.

It is probable that “Son’s” legal name was Mabren, the same as his father’s, but he was always called Son, and that is what is remembered. What is interesting to note is the 1910 U.S. Census shows M.G.’s son Mabren Jr. as being 1 year old, and his son Cecil as being 8 years of age. This fits the tradition wherein the first son is given the name of his paternal grandfather and the second son is named after his father.

The house that Bernice described Son living in was, basically, a four-room house with a front porch. It was larger than the small houses to the south of it, but the construction was the same. It was located north of the two-room tenant houses, closer to the big house.

Bernice and Frank moved into one of the three smaller, two-room houses. Bernice said “back then,” a couple with no children would expect to live in a two-room house. She said there were many houses in the area like the two-room house they lived in. It was typical in size and construction—board and batten with a tin roof. It had one front door and one back door and a small front porch. The other three houses on the southern end of M.G.’s property were the same. The house had no fireplace; it had an old wood stove for cooking and heat. Bernice stated: “It was a little house, sure enough, just big enough for two.”

Bernice remembers the well where she went to get water. She said the well was shared by those who lived in the three small tenant houses. She couldn't recall what water source was near the big house, but she did remember those in the big house didn't go to a well but had a hand pump, which could indicate a cistern. The Rev. McKinley Jones, who passed by the house when he walked to get the train to Huntsville, says he remembers seeing a windmill by the big house.

**Working in the Field.** Bernice said that sometimes she cooked for her Uncle Mabren and his wife. She also worked with the men in the fields, "because that was what you did back then." M.G. Chaney paid 90 cents a day for working in the cotton field. Other people paid 70 or 80 cents. Bernice said:

We'd work the fields. We had a 100-acre cotton field to work. Then there was corn and hay. Uncle Mabren had cows, everyone had a vegetable garden, and just about everybody had hogs. You'd salt them down. We'd gather our corn and shell it off the cob and carry it to the gristmill. It wasn't easy to shell those cobs either. That cotton wasn't easy to pick. I picked about 250 pounds, but I have picked 300 and weighed it up to carry to the gin. [Where was the gristmill?] I'm not sure where they took it. Wynn Jones, it seems like he had one.

**Chaney Neighbors.** According to Bernice, M.G. Chaney and his neighbor, Wynn Jones, were two of the richest men in Madison County. Wynn Jones was M.G.'s neighbor directly to the east. On the Army Real Estate Map this is shown as parcel A-15. The owner of the parcel directly north of Wynn Jones (A-14) is shown as Helen Wynn Rand.

M.G. and Bertie's daughter Mattie Bell was born in 1904. She married Wynn Jones (Parcel A-15) "after she got out of school." M.G. wanted to give his daughter 100 acres (a field) when she married. Wynn Jones declined, saying he already had too much land to take care of. Wynn Jones is said to have had a large, one-story house. Mattie Bell and Wynn Jones had a daughter, Julia Wynn Jones, who married a King. Mattie Bell Jones died young. Julia inherited everything from Wynn Jones when she was 12 years old. Bernice said: "She got the land the arsenal didn't take." Leotra Estralanger, a teacher, was appointed the guardian for Julia.

Bennie Crutcher and his wife lived in one of the other three two-room houses. He was the bus driver, and drove the bus to the school in Madison. When asked if Mr. Crutcher was White or Black, Bernice said he was a white man: "We didn't have Black school bus drivers back then." Bernice proceeded to talk about the school.

**School.** The land for Elko School (A- 18) was donated by M.G. Chaney. Bernice attended the school until its consolidation with Madison High School. The following description was found in the Heritage Room at the Madison County Library. The author was simply listed as "Dilworth, Draft" and had no date.

In the late 1930's, Chaney School was consolidated with Madison High School. Chaney was located in the Chaney community just south of Madison Pike near Elko Switch. In 1926, Mr. M.G. Chaney donated his land for a school.

The building was a two-room frame construction heated by two big heaters fired with coal. The rooms were furnished with modern wood desks and a table for a teacher's desk. Outside restrooms were used. There were two teachers for the first six grades.

In early 1940, Mr. Chaney sold his farm to the government and the county board sold Chaney School building. Some of the Chaney teachers included Mr. Addie Hinds, Miss Mattie Bell Chaney, Miss Leotra Esslinger, Mr. Cecil Teal, Mr. A. S. Hodges and Mr. Louie Morris.

**Church.** Bernice said she went to church in the two-room schoolhouse. She said in addition to going on Sundays, they went to meetings after they got done working in the fields about two or three nights a week. The night meetings consisted of preaching and singing. Bernice said her religious denomination was Church of Christ. She could not remember the denomination of the preacher who came to preach at services held at the Chaney School. She said it didn't matter about the denomination because that was the only place to go to church in that area.

**Store.** Bernice could not recall a store within the vicinity of M.G. Chaney's property. Before she married Frank, her parents had lived not very far from M.G. Chaney, and she remembered a store there. She said that "at Uncle Mabren's" she remembers buying from the rolling store.

## **PARCEL B-61: WALTER F. CHANEY**

### **The Move to "Pappa Chaney's Place"**

Bernice and Frank moved to the property further to the south, down by Indian Creek, to land owned by W.F. Chaney, which is shown as parcel B-61 on the Army Real Estate Map. Bernice always called Frank's father, Walter F. Chaney, "Pappa Chaney." His wife was Nora Louise Baker from Owens Crossroads. Walter and Nora had a number of sons and a daughter Pearl. One daughter, Cornelia, died at birth. His children were Frank (the oldest), Mac, Barney, Merrill who died in the battle for Saipan on June 22, 1944, Pearl, Lawrence, and Hosea.

Bernice recalled two houses were on the parcel owned by Walter Chaney. It seemed probable the two houses would represent the historic components of 1Ma786 and 1Ma787, the two archaeological sites recorded on the parcel. In studying the map, the researcher realized the area seemed to be the same location she had been documenting

with the Rev. McKinley Jones. Bernice did not remember the Jones family. However, Hosea Chaney, who sells insurance and knows many people, said he knew and had talked with McKinley Jones. The Jones family had lived in the same area.

The researcher recalled something McKinley Jones had told her a few years before. When the researcher had asked about birthdays, holidays and gifts, McKinley Jones had answered that nobody had much, but he remembered when he was a boy, and it was his birthday. The Jones family's pumpkins hadn't done very well. A little White boy who lived nearby knew McKinley liked pumpkins. He saw McKinley going by, and gave him a pumpkin for his birthday. That was a nice gift.

The researcher reminded Rev. Jones of that story and asked him the name of the little white boy. He thought a few seconds, and replied, "It was Lawrence Chaney."

Lawrence Chaney was one of W.F. Chaney's sons.

McKinley Jones said M.G. Chaney owned the land (Parcel B-61) where his family had lived. The Jones family owned their own stock and equipment, but they lived on M.G.'s land and gave him a share of the crop. McKinley Jones stated there were three houses on the property. He stated the property always belonged to M.G. Chaney.

When the researcher explained the Army Real Estate Property map showed that, at the time of Government purchase, the property belonged to W.F. Chaney, Jones put together the pieces and came up with the whole picture. The reason his family had moved from the M.G. Chaney land (Parcel B-61) was that M.G. sold it to his brother Walter. Jones had always thought the W.F. Chaney family was living on M.G.'s land.

Prior to moving from the Chaney land, the Jones family had been living in the four-room house. There were two smaller ones. The Jones family moved to land north and east of Union Hill C.P. Presbyterian Church. Walter F. Chaney and his family moved into the house vacated by the Jones family. Frank and Bernice had one of the smaller two houses. In thinking this over, McKinley Jones realized now that Walter had acquired the property with plans for his family, including Frank and young wife Bernice to move there with him.

Bernice did not remember a third house. When asked about the third house (in 2005) Jones said the houses "weren't much," and the third one may have fallen to ruin. Jones said his family had lived in each of the three houses at one time or another, which is consistent with the information given by him in 1997.

The purpose of this research is to document the people and the communities. Making the connection between two families who lived on the same piece of land and were then neighbors through the story of a Black boy and a White boy and the birthday gift of a pumpkin is recreating the rural community.



**Back row: Walter Freeman Chaney (Papa), Nora Louise Baker Chaney (Mama), Pearl (later married, becoming Pearl Griffin), and Merrill. Front row: Hosea and Lawrence. Taken about 1940.**

### **Description of the Houses**

Bernice said when she and Frank moved from “Uncle Mabren’s” (Parcel A-17), they moved into the house of Frank’s parents and lived with them. She said that later they moved to the tenant house. Since Bernice and Frank began to have children, the move was probably related to the need for more space. Bernice described the houses.

**The Tenant House:** The researcher asked Bernice to draw a sketch of the house she lived in. The sketch showed the front porch facing north. The house had two rooms in the front. One was used as a living room and one as a bedroom. A third room had been added on the rear of the house at an earlier point in time. It was the kitchen. Bernice cannot remember the house having a fireplace. She remembers using a wood burning heating stove (“a wood heater”). The barn was “in back of “ the house to the west. When asked about the construction of the house, Bernice stated it was “just a wood house, built like houses were then.” The roof was tin. It had no basement or stone or brick foundation. She said they had a chicken house out back.

**Walter Chaney’s House.** The front of Walter’s house faced to the east. The house had four rooms and a fireplace. The outhouse was a two-seater. It was out back, at an angle

to the east. The chicken house was left of the outhouse. “Mama Chaney” had chickens, turkeys and pigs. There was a corncrib in the barn to keep the corn for the chickens and a loft. Bernice and Frank used Pappa Chaney’s mules.

## **Daily Life**

**Working in the Field:** Bernice described working in the cotton fields:

First, you had to chop. Thin it out, dig the grass out. Then lay it by. When it gets so big, you go through again with a cultivator; it has a plow to go between to rows. Then start to pick around the first of September. Back then we had **cold** winters and snow. We’d get cold. We’d get out and pick sacks of bolls and then sit by the fireplace at Pappa Chaney’s. We picked cotton when it was sleeting and we about froze to death. [What did you wear?] **Everything you had**, you put on! [Said vehemently]

**Water Source.** We had a well.

**The Outhouse.** Bernice said they had an outhouse that was “out back.” When asked if her family threw things they wanted to dispose of in the outhouse, the researcher again experienced the questioning look and raised eyebrow. Bernice volunteered a comment about toilet paper:

For toilet paper, we used the Sears catalog. We could get them free. When we used it up, we’d try to get another one—Sears or Penneys. There was a saying, “Either that or a corn cob.” [Did you ever know of anyone to use a corncob?] No, I never knew anybody who really used one.

**The Mailbox.** Having joked about using a corncob in the outhouse, and apparently thinking about paper possibilities, Bernice added: “We lived two miles from the mailbox. So, you weren’t going to get a newspaper. If we’d got one, we wouldn’t have time to read it.” Bernice noted that she and her sister-in-law sometimes rode the mules to the mailbox.

**Garbage.** When asked what they did with garbage, Bernice said:

You didn’t put dirty cans out. We always washed the cans. We had hog wire around where we put the garbage. I have walked a solid mile to get wire. We didn’t have many cans because we had our own stuff. We used glass jars for canning. Back then you could cook jars a long time on the wood stove. On a modern stove, you can put the jars of beans on a cookie sheet in the oven for two and a half hours, and set the oven as low as it will go. We had corn bread and biscuits. We had no yeast back then. I made biscuits out of corn meal, soda, salt, and milk.

**Washing Clothes and Making Soap.** When asked about washing clothes, Bernice said:

We'd boil the clothes in the wash pot. You had a stick to punch the clothes down in the water. The first thing you got when you got married was a rubbing board. You'd save the hog lard to make soap. Put the grease in the pot. Open the Red Devil lye. Cook and stir, cook and stir. Pour it out in anything you could find. It would get too thick if you left it in the pot. You could pour it out on a piece of tin. Let it cool some before you start to pour. When it is almost beyond stirring, you take it out with a dipper. You used it for washing clothes and yourself. It made the best shampoo! It would make your hair shine!

**Quilting and Sewing.** Bernice spent many hours at Pappa Chaney's house quilting with "Momma Chaney." She said that Momma would start on one end of the quilt and she'd start on the other [Bernice is left-handed]. Asked to describe the quilting frame, Bernice said:

The frame hung from the ceiling. It had four staples in the ceiling. You put a strong screen on each end and let it hang down. Quilting frames have two sides and two ends. There would be a hole drilled down the two frames where they cross. Put a nail in it to hold them together. There were heavy strings coming down from the ceiling to each end of the quilt. You could use a sawhorse frame, but that didn't hang down and you couldn't push the quilt away from you or pull it to you like you can on one that hangs from the ceiling.

We'd use coal oil lamps. I'd sew many a stitch by coal oil lamp. I had a treadle sewing machine. Back then we made bonnets, aprons, and dresses from the feed sacks. The fertilizer ones were white. We had to soak the fertilizer out, soak, pour out, and then again. The fertilizer would about eat up your hands. You'd get out all you could then boil them.

### **The Depression Years**

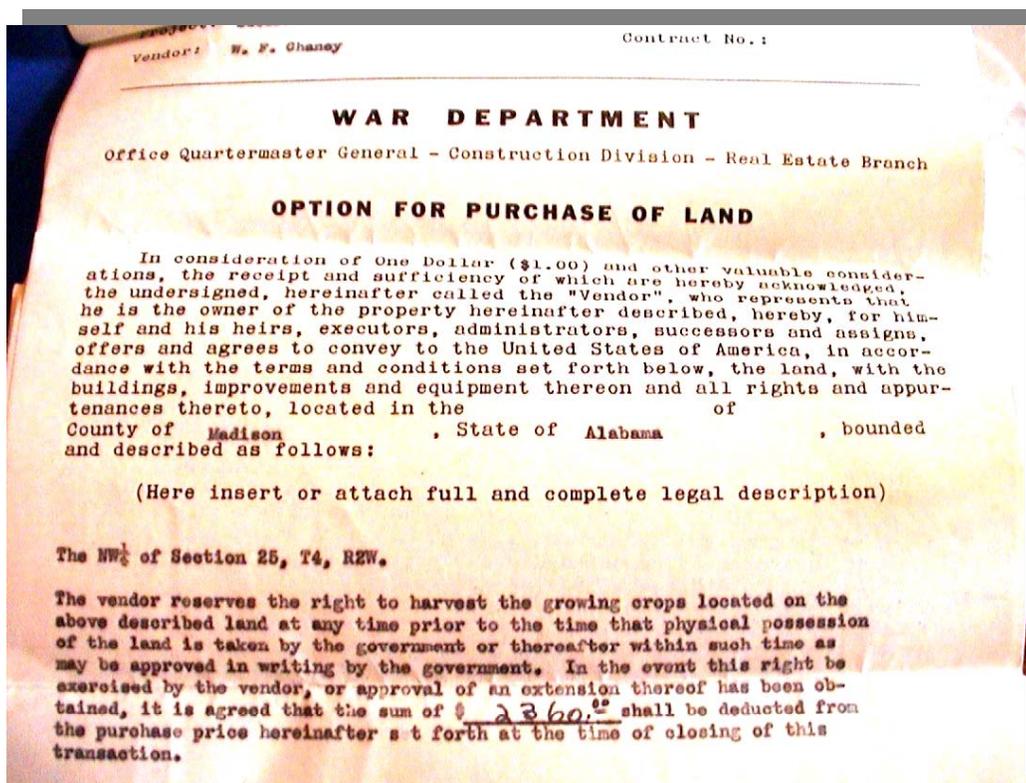
The researcher asked Bernice Chaney if she could remember the Depression years. She counted back from the age she is now and said she was 12 years old when Roosevelt was elected, and went on to say:

My brother-in-law Barney went to the CCC camp. We had to plow part of the cotton up. What was the hardest part? Working in the field. You had to have a cow. No cow, no milk. I don't know how we lived. People were so humble and good to each other. If we got through our work, we'd go help the neighbor. No matter who got through first, they'd help each other.

## Walter F. Chaney Ownership of A-61 and Sale to the War Department

Bernice said:

We were told to move on August 15, 1941. We moved on December 21, 1941. We came out with a mule and a wagon and ten head of cows. Some people contested the sale until the last date. Then they were told if they didn't move, their property would be condemned. Some people never did get paid because they wouldn't make any settlement.



**The War Department option for the purchase of the land. Photographed from original documents in the possession of Hosea Chaney.**

The Option for Purchase allowed landowners to return to and harvest the crops that they had planted; however, as shown in the contract above, an agreed upon sum was deducted from the purchase price at the time of the closing of the transaction if they did so. The returning residents had to wear badges they were given to go through the guard gates; the gates had been set up before the people had moved off their land.

Walter Chaney moved to Early, Alabama, near where the Coosa Lake is now. At the end of WWII, it was rumored that the Army would sell the land back to its former owners. Walter wanted his land back—the land he'd spent many years clearing before the government took it. He moved back to Huntsville ready to buy it. The Army didn't sell the land back. After living in Huntsville Village for a number of years, Walter moved to Oleander [near Arab]. Mac Chaney (Walter's grandson) said:

During the last ten years of his life, my grandfather was blind as a result of sugar diabetes. Then he got pneumonia, which was the cause of his death. On the way to the hospital, and in tears, he said to me, "I wish I could have gotten my land back."

As for his father, Frank Chaney, Mac Chaney said:

My father passed away in 1972 from complications we believe of mustard gas he contacted while working on Redstone Arsenal during WWII. Long into the night for decades, he coughed, until he developed lung cancer in the bronchial tubes.

QM-RE Form 88  
Project REDSSTONE ARSENAL, CHEMICAL PLANT  
Vendor W. F. Chaney  
Tract No. B 31  
Contract No. 766 QM 10181

WAR DEPARTMENT  
Office Quartermaster General - Construction Division  
Real Estate Branch

Notice of Acceptance of Option for Purchase of Land

Date September 18, 1941

Mr. W. F. Chaney  
Route # 4  
Huntsville, Alabama

Dear Sir:

Notice is hereby given that, on the 17th day of September, 1941, the United States of America accepted the option dated the 8th day of September, 1941, for the acquisition of the tract of land situate in the County of Madison, State of Alabama, more particularly described in the option.

A fully executed copy of the accepted option is inclosed.

For the Quartermaster General:

Very truly yours,  
*John J. O'Brien*  
JOHN J. O'BRIEN  
Chief, Real Estate Branch  
Construction Division  
Assistant

Incl.  
Option

The War Department sent notice of acceptance of option for the purchase to land owners. Photograph of the original document in the possession of Hosea Chaney.



**Bernice Chaney began making quilts when she was a girl, and now, at age 85, she still makes quilts. She holds the “Horn of Plenty” quilt, all beautifully hand-stitched. When last visited, Bernice was making a quilt for a grandchild. On each block, she was stitching a beautifully embroidered bird. Each bird is the State Bird of one of the United States of America. Since the U.S. has more states than blocks needed to make a quilt, she said she will embroider two of the State Birds on pillow covers. Photo on the left shows Bernice as a younger woman.**

## THE MCANALLY FAMILY LIVED ON CHANEY'S LAND (PARCEL A-17)

Peggy McAnally contacted the researcher because she was interested in learning the location on the arsenal where her family had lived. She had been told they had leased the land of M.G. Chaney. What she described was Parcel A-17. Since M.G. continued to live and farm the property until the time of the mandatory sale of the property, he did not lease it. The researcher explained that the McAnallys could have rented land from Chaney. In those days, renting meant having one's own stock and tools, and giving the landowner a smaller portion of the crop than a sharecropper did. However, the researcher later found the entry written by another McAnally descendant in the *Heritage Book of Madison County, Alabama*, which stated that "Jack" McAnally was a sharecropper on Chaney land.



The Albert McAnally Family. They resided in a tenant home on M.G. Chaney property.

This photo, provided by Peggy McAnally, was taken at one of the houses on M.G. Chaney property when family members were visiting Albert McAnally and his family. The woman standing on the porch in the far left is Mattie McAnally, wife of Albert. Beside her, Albert holds baby Charley. Albert's father, General [his name, not a military rank] Jackson McAnally stands by the post, and in front of him are twins Roy and Raymond. The front row, from the left, the first boy is thought to be Floyd but the name is uncertain for the smaller boy beside him. Odell is in the dark hat and then the girl Cora in the hat with the white band. Beside her is Nannie Hendricks, daughter of Albert. In the hat with the wide, flat brim is Tea (who is the daughter of General) standing beside her husband Edgar Sanders—their daughter Margie stands in front of them. The boys on the right are Clarence and Gordon, sons of Albert.

## **On the RSA Public Affairs Office Website: McAnally Interview**

The Public Affairs Office website (Pam Rogers) has an article from *The Redstone Rocket* (“The Goddard House serves as a reminder of pre-Army days...But a former resident believes it may be haunted,” 25 October 1989). A woman named Nellie McAnally was interviewed. She said her father was the overseer of the Chaney [spelled Chancy in the article] farm. She said she and her husband lived in two rooms on the second floor of the Chaney house right after they were married.

**Nellie McAnally Described Chaney House.** Nellie McAnally walked through the Goddard House and described how it been before it was changed by the Army

A drive lined with cedar trees led to the front door. The house was clapboard then and had a small porch in the front and a larger, screened porch in back. Each room had its own fireplace. There was no electricity and the only running water came from a tap in the kitchen.

In walking through the Goddard House, she went into a bedroom on the right front of the house and said,

There were big folding doors between this room and the dining room in the back, so they could open them and make a ballroom. There was a fireplace over there, with columns all the way to the ceiling, and mirrors. It was beautiful. It makes you wonder why they would want to change it all.

The bedroom “at the left rear” of the Goddard house had been the Chaney’s kitchen. Entering the room, Nellie said:

We had cabinets along here, and on this wall a door led out to our screened porch where we ate during warm weather. There was a water faucet in here, but no sink. That was the only running water in the house, and there were no bathrooms.

Nellie pointed out where a second stairway had been removed, as well as where the stairs to the attic had been, “which used to lead from the upstairs back hall.” She noted the many partitions and rooms that had been carved from what was once four large rooms and two halls.

**Nellie McAnally said the House was Haunted.** She provided examples:

One morning my mother and sister-in-law were in the kitchen. My sister-in-law was churning and my mother was washing dishes. My sister-in-law said, ‘look, Mrs. Russell, there’s a dog.’ It was standing there, in the doorway of the kitchen, and was soaking wet, even though the sun was shining outside. It had the body of a dog and the face of an old man.

Leona (the sister-in-law) threw a stick of stove wood at it, but missed. It turned around and my mother followed it and it just disappeared.

Nellie McAnally also stated that family members were awakened on several occasions by the sound of the huge folding doors between the living room and dining room being slammed back, only to find them in normal positions. When it stormed, a baby was heard crying outside of the window.

McAnally said in the interview that M.G. Chaney “used to lock himself in an upstairs back bedroom, hoping that whatever occupied the house would show itself to him, but it never did.”

**What the Chaney's Said.** Bernice and Mac Chaney were told about the article and asked about the ghostly happenings. They said neither M.G. Chaney nor any other family members had told them about ghostly happenings. They said they were sure they would remember “something like that.”

### **The McAnally History**

The following information about the history of the McAnally family and General Jackson (‘Jack’) McAnally was found in the entry submitted by Billy Lee McAnally and Donald Marcus McAnally to *The Heritage of Madison County, Alabama*.

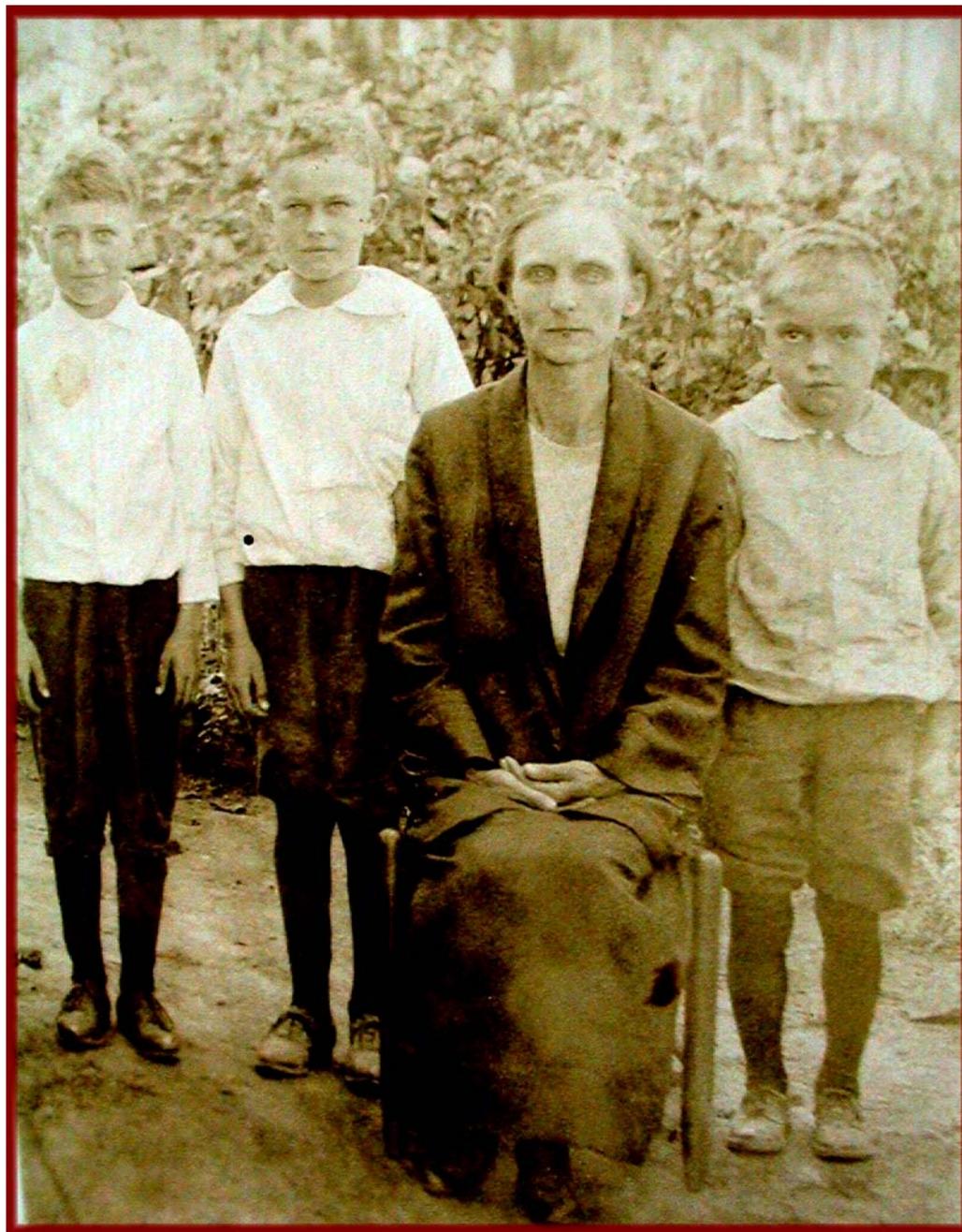
Albert McAnally’s father, General Jackson (Jack) McAnally owned a store at the corner of Holmes Avenue and Pulaski Pike. The McAnallys originated in Scotland. The arrival of the first McAnally and the part the next generations played in American history is noteworthy. Albert’s great great great grandfather Charles was kidnapped from the shores of Scotland and transported to America in the hull of a ship with soldiers. His son John was a veteran of both the French and Indian War and the American Revolutionary War.

John’s oldest son David served in the campaign defeating Cornwallis. John’s brother, Captain Charles McAnally commanded American forces based in North Carolina. John’s son Elijah was a frontiersman and a land speculator who traveled south from the Bristol, Tennessee area to Big Spring in 1813 and then on to Ditto Landing, in what was then the Mississippi Territory. He joined forces with General Andrew Jackson.

After the war, Elijah moved to what was to become Blount County. Elijah had great admiration and respect for Andrew Jackson, and he requested that his sons name the first-born son after Andrew Jackson. In 1848, Edmond McAnally respected his father’s wishes. His firstborn son’s name was recorded on his birth certificate as General Jackson McAnally.

General Jackson McAnally settled near Valhermosa Springs in Morgan County after the Civil War. In December of 1867, he married Mary Lucinda Rutledge, the great great

granddaughter of John Rutledge, a signer of the U.S. Constitution, and they moved to their first home, Oleander. In the 1880s, “Jack” moved to New Hope, where he was a sharecropper. On the death of his wife in 1898, he and most of the family moved to Huntsville where he owned a store. His son was a sharecropper on Chaney property.



**Mattie McAnally and sons.**

## MATTHEWS CAVE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

In the book *Tales of Huntsville Caves* written by William W. Varnedoe, Jr. and Charles A. Lundquist (2005) in commemoration of the Huntsville, Alabama bicentennial (1805-2005) and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Huntsville Grotto, National Speleological Society, the authors state that James Manning obtained the land where Matthews Cave is located on February 2, 1818. They state that in that transaction, the property was referred to as “Cave Plantation,” so it was “clear that the cave was a significant feature of the property” (p. 42). They suggest that the stream running through the cave may have been a convenient water supply, and the cave may have been used for cool storage of food items. It seems that in the early years, there were three entrance holes from which one could drop into the cave.

Varnedoe and Lundquist (2005) explain that when Dr. Walter B. Jones recorded the cave, as number 23 in the Catalogue of Alabama Caves and Caverns, the property was no longer owned by the Matthews family, but Jones noted that the cave “was on the old Matthews place” hence the name Matthews Cave.

The entrance of the cave was a short distance from where the plantation house was built and a short distance south of the road. Bernice Chaney said “the new road” was built over the cave. She said she remembers the cave from the 1920’s and 1930’s, but she was not allowed to go into it.

Varnedoe and Lundquist make additional comments about Matthews Cave through the years:

Matthews Cave is near the north boundary in an area now used for field training of troops. For some reason the army dug out the approach to one of the entrances so that one could almost walk in. Therefore, many opportunities occurred for casual visits by army and other personnel.

In 1993, the arsenal authorities decided to clean the cave. Over the years, a large collection of junk had been thrown into it and its walls were vandalized by extensive spray painting. The Huntsville Grotto bid on a contract to perform the clean up and was selected for the task. The walls were scrubbed clean, except for an historic inscription discovered in the process. (Varnedoe and Lundquist 2005:43)

The inscription photographed by the Huntsville Grotto of the National Speleological Society:



**Historic inscription found in Matthews Cave. It reads: J.C. ‘A’ T. Co A 69 RGT NY Source: Varnedoe and Lundquist 2005:43.**

Elizabeth Humes Chapman (in her book *Changing Huntsville-1890-1899*) discusses the encampment of several units of Spanish American War soldiers in Huntsville following the hostilities in Cuba—Company A of the 69 Regiment of Infantry, New York Volunteers was one of several units encamped in western Huntsville during the last half of 1898. After examining a roster of Company A of the 69<sup>th</sup> RGT in the National Archives, she found three soldiers with initials “J.C.” They were James C. Callahan, Joseph Clark, and James Coleman. The meaning of the “A.T.” was not discerned, but it is suggested they could have identified a “subunit”.

During their stay in Huntsville, the 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the New York Regiment made friends with local residents, including “Uncle Matt.” When the regiment marched in a victory parade in New York City following the peace treaty with Spain on December 10, 1898, they took “Uncle Matt” to New York to march with them.



**Uncle Matt from Huntsville was taken by Company A of the 69th Regiment of Infantry to march in the Victory Parade in New York City following the Dec. 10, 1898 peace treaty with Spain. Courtesy of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.**

## CHARLES WELLS

Interview May 2005

Charles Wells is the son of William R. Wells (born June 24, 1888) and Roberta Adella (Birdie) Perkins Wells (born 1890 and died 1937). The Wells family share croppered on land by Weeden Mountain, which Charles Wells said was called Young Mountain. The location of their house was not identified by parcel on the Army Real Estate Map, but a description of the area is given.

**Where Charles Lived.** The house Charles lived in as a boy with his parents and brothers and sisters (Joseph, David, Robert, Perry, Arthur, Telette, and Nancy) had four rooms, two in the front and two in the back, and a fifth room that was the kitchen built on the right side of the back. The house was built on corner stones, had a tin roof, and 3 inch wide batten siding. The house had a fireplace that was shared between two rooms as well as a small Warm Morning heater.

A road went behind the house where they lived. Charles said he and the other boys would walk and look for “fossils—fish bones.” Nearby was an old house, on the edge of the mountain. The old house was in poor shape. Men would go there to gamble. The boards in the floor had spaces between them so wide that when the gamblers dropped coins, the coins would fall through to the ground beneath the floorboards. The boys would go up and rake under the house with a hoe. Charles noted they had buffalo nickels back then. He said once they found a half-dime when they raked.

Right behind that old house was a “huge cave.” That was how the boys thought of it back then, but in thinking about it, Charles said it would have been a sinkhole. He said you could throw a rock in it, and it seemed like it dropped a minute or two. Charles worked on RSA in the 1950s (developing double base propellants to fuel the Nike, boosters for the shuttle and bazooka type rockets for the Army) and knew that the Army had put dye in the sinkhole to see where it would come out—the dye came out in the Tennessee River close to Triana.

**Train to Huntsville.** On Saturday mornings Charles’s family would get dressed up and catch the train to go to Huntsville and shop. They would go in the morning and return in the afternoon. Sometimes they would take a mule and buggy. They did not have an automobile. There were six sons and two daughters in the Wells family.

**Home-made Clothes.** Charles’s mother made clothes from flour sacks. Charles said he was 4-10-7 because his mother used fertilizer sacks for making his underwear and sometimes the bleach didn’t get it all [the numbers] off. He recalled his mother washing clothes. His mother had a # 3 washtub, a scrubbing board, and a big black pot. She boiled the clothes in the pot over the fire and poked them with a paddle. He said his dad got their first washer. It had a little gasoline motor. During gas rationing, they used their ration to buy gas for the washing machine.

**Butchering Hogs and Preserving the Meat.** Charles said they ate everything that now they say is bad for you. He said, “We grew up on beans and corn, and everything was cooked in lard.” During the fall, they killed hogs. They got the water in the big pot hot and dropped the hog in. Scalding it helped in removing the bristles.

The skin from the hog was put in the big pot to cook down and get the grease out. They dipped the grease out of the pot and strained it through a cloth and put it in five-gallon [tin] cans. The skin that was left was put in a cloth. They pulled up the cloth and took a paddle and pushed in it. In later years, they got a wooden crackling press to put it in to squeeze it. This is how the hog’s skin was processed to make cracklings.

They salted the hog down with plain salt and put it in a box. It was left in the box about three weeks and then the salt was washed off and it was rubbed down with Morton’s Sugar Cure. Charles said they left it in that a long time, a month or so, then they hung the hams, etc. up in the smoke house and built a hickory fire under them. They smoked sausage also.

For the sausage, his mother made sacks out of old sheets. She put salt, pepper, and sage in with the meat and then ground it. She’d pack the ground meat in the tubes made from sheets, and it was hung to smoke. After the sausages were smoked, she dipped them in paraffin to coat them. This kept the bugs out. Charles’ wife said her family didn’t do that, and she added that you could buy tubes. She said a sausage and biscuit was what she took to school for lunch.

**School.** Charles went to the Elko School, a wooden building with two rooms. One teacher taught three grades. To get to the school, he walked north, and then it was on the west side of the road.

**Cemeteries.** Charles said none of his family is buried on the arsenal. However, in regard to cemeteries, he was told by a man he knew who worked there in the 1950s that in the early 1950s the crews got tired of using weed eaters to cut around cemetery markers so they put them in trucks and dumped them in the river. This is a statement that the researcher also heard from another source. The fact that tombstones that were known to be in some of the cemeteries are no longer there supports Wells’ statement. The area where the stones were allegedly dumped in the river is by the lodge at the recreation area.

**MARCY LANGFORD**

Interviewed in 2000 and visited other times through 2005



Marcy Langford, born July 22, 1915.

Marcy was visited a few times over the span of the interviewing process. She is a very spry and alert woman for a woman of her years. After the first interview, the researcher scheduled a time to pick up “Ms. Marcy” and take her to the arsenal. A colleague in the Directorate of Environmental Management, Troy Pitts, agreed to accompany the researcher and drive so that the researcher would be free to talk and take notes. He was quite a good sport when Ms. Marcy continuously referred to him as “Our Driver.” There was no doubt that Ms. Marcy had a picture of where she lived in her mind, but for her to find it, she would have had to be taken in by the roads she knew. The farm roads that led off Elko Road (Rideout Road) are no longer there and fencing prevents access. However, the subject provided many details about where she lived, and if maps and the terrain were studied, it might be possible to connect her descriptions to an archaeological site if a site has been identified that fits the location.

### **Marcy’s Family**

Marcy’s paternal grandmother, Sally Beach Eliff married three times. At one point, she had no husband and no money. She was living in Giles, Tennessee. She put what she had in a covered wagon and came to Huntsville to live in the Poor House. With her were her two daughters and a grandson, the little boy who would become Marcy’s father. Marcy’s father was Cole Younger Eliff. He went by his middle name, Younger. He was born in Fayetteville, Tennessee in 1885.

**Cole Younger Eliff**



After Younger Eliff married Janie Vickers, he lived with her on a little farm of 60 acres in a place near Huntsville that Marcy said was called Hump. Bentley Young, who owned a drugstore (in Huntsville), kept asking her father to oversee his farm. He talked to him about it on Cotton Trade Day. Younger Eliff had built a house out on his own farm, and his wife really liked it. Eliff told Young that he’d have to have a house just like the one they were going to leave. Bentley Young agreed. Eliff would build a house just like the one he left on the Bentley Young property.

Marcy said:

Daddy still owned his little house in Hump. He rented it. It was a little far [to go to]. The house had four big rooms and two porches. Momma loved that house. Bentley Young said he’d furnish Daddy the material to build another just like it out on his place. In the fall of 1921, Daddy finished building that house. It had tongue and groove flooring. The walls and all were pine. It had a brick foundation. [This provides the description of the house her family lived in on pre-arsenal land.]

Mrs. Eliff was expecting a baby, so they couldn’t move right away. Marcy’s brother was born on March 22, 1922. Nine days after his birth, the Eliff family set out to Bentley Young’s land on what is now Redstone Arsenal. Younger Eliff led the way, in Bentley Young’s wagon, pulled by a team of mules named Abe and Jack. Marcy said, “The

wagon was as full as it could be, loaded with an old cook stove, bedsprings, chiffarobe, wardrobe, China cabinet, dining room table, and a side table for the kitchen.” Mrs. Eliff and her five children followed in a covered wagon. Marcy said:

My brother, Mildred and Flossie [Marcy’s sisters], and Momma were sitting in a spring seat. That fits on the sideboard in the wagon. My baby brother was nine days old. Momma put him in an oblong dishpan made of white granite. I still have that.

Momma died April 2, 1937, out there on Bentley Young’s place. Mother died from miscarrying. She was a petite person. She miscarried thirteen times in five years. She already had seven children.

### **Where They Lived**

The location of the Bentley Young property could not be pinpointed on the Army Real Estate Map. Apparently, he sold it before the time of sale of the land to the Government. Marcy said her family lived by Young Mountain. Charles Wells, who lived in the same area, said Weeden Mountain was once called Young Mountain. Marcy said they could see the mountain from their house, and “there was a cemetery back there, too.” She said there was a story about that mountain:

One time a man went up the mountain, looking for his little boy who had drowned in a pond during a dark and stormy night. So on nights that were bad, you could see the figure of a man running up the mountain with a lantern looking for his little boy. I saw it one night.

A cherry tree was in the yard, and chestnut trees were near their house. Marcy said, “We planted flowers, buttercups, and they were all over.” No chestnut trees would be there now. During the 1930s, as the result of an insect that came to visit, all the chestnut trees died out.

Marcy said her family got to their house by coming in on Madison Pike. As they came in on the Pike, Gibson’s store was on the right. She said, “It was a little old store. There was Chaney’s place and then McDonnell’s [Parcel A-24]. We lived about a half-mile after you passed Elko switch. D.G. Foster [Parcel A-21] was down below Chaney’s.” Marcy was probably making a guess on that distance. The McDonnell and the Young property joined.

### **Houses on the Property**

**The Eliff’s House.** The house that Younger Eliff built on the property had four large rooms and a tin roof; it was the same as the house he owned in Hump, which was described above. Marcy said the front porch “went all the way across, and the back porch

went all the way across the back.” During the summer, her father would put boards and screen across the front porch so they could sleep there. The pump for the well was on the porch.

Marcy said the fireplace was in the bedroom, and it “went through both sides” (opened in each bedroom). In the bedroom, they had beds and a big wooden box, a quilt box. They sat in rocking chairs and on trunks. They had a “big old wardrobe.” In addition, Marcy said, “We had a big old kitchen, with a big old side table where you would cook and hang up bread pans and iron pots.”

**Other Houses.** Marcy noted, “There were “a lot of houses upon the face of the mountain.” Her house was further back, on the road. Marcy said there were three old log houses out there and some “slab houses as well.” She said they were built from rough boards:

We called it barn lumber. The boards went straight up and kind of overlapped. Most of the wood was oak. After the boards seasoned out, you put little strips over the boards [to seal the cracks].

Marcy said the cracks in the log houses “weren’t sealed that way. You can dig down below the topsoil to get the dirt, then add something, and you use that to chink between the logs.”

In addition, to these houses, there was a bunkhouse. The bunkhouse, Marcy said, “slept four.” The hired hands that were single men stayed there. The hired hands who stayed there were Jack Anders, Ed Hugh, Ed Hornbuckle, Tommy Parker, and Ernie Stefans, commonly known as Jabbo.

Marcy added, “Henry and Effie Lanier lived on the Young place. His brother lived in Pond Beat.”

### **Tom Hatchett**

Tom Hatchett was living on the property when the Eliff family moved there. Marcy said:

Uncle Tom Hatchett was an old Black man. He lived in an old log cabin up on the mountain. The house burned down in the winter of 1921. His wife died. I’m not sure if she burned up in the fire or was already dead. He moved into the bunkhouse. [The other men in the bunkhouse were White, so this is noteworthy, considering customs of the time.] He helped Daddy build our house on Bentley Young’s land.

He gave my Momma a cast iron tea kettle and a muffin tin after his cabin burned. [Marcy still has these.] He was as black as the ace of spades and a hardshell Baptist preacher. He was sweet. When momma was pregnant,

he'd help Momma tote buckets of water. She didn't have to ask him. Uncle Tom loved my baby brother and helped Momma out with him until she died.

Momma fed him [Tom Hatchett] just like she did her family. Momma cooked for four or five hands.

Uncle Tom rode a horse to church. Every Sunday morning he'd brush that horse. He'd let us kids ride it. Tom had part of a foot cut off in the sawmill. Uncle Tom's grandson and great grandson live in Harvest. Uncle Tom had a boy named Clarence.

The researcher identified a telephone number for the great grandson in Harvest; however, calls were not returned.

### **Sharecroppers and Crops**

Marcy said her father was hired to oversee the sharecroppers. Bentley Young gave him orders for the sharecroppers and hired hands. She said, "The sharecroppers got to keep 50 percent of what they made. If they didn't work their crops, then Daddy got to take out of their crops."

Marcy said, "We'd put the cotton on a three-deck, two horse wagon. We'd go down to the old courthouse with the cotton and hook up to a big chain outside the old courthouse. Then Daddy would take us to get an ice cream at the drug store."

### **Life on the Farm**

**Cooking/Food.** Marcy said they cooked many vegetables. They grew their own vegetables on the farm. They had chickens and pigs. Sometimes when her father came back from town, he would bring home a crate, half oranges and half apples. She said,

After the crate was empty, Daddy would put straw in it, for the chickens. One day I went and sat on one of those crates, and there was a snake under the straw. Snakes will wrap their head around a pole and then shake themselves to kill a chicken.

Mrs. Eliff cooked for the hired hands in the bunkhouse as well as for her family. After she died, Marcy cooked for them. Marcy said her mother taught her how to cook, because she knew that she was going to die.

Marcy said her Daddy would kill seven 200-pound hogs at a time. Each one rendered about 50 pounds of lard, two hams, and two shoulders. They had a big iron kettle for rendering; they stirred it with a big paddle, which they used to dip out the cracklings.

They salted and sugar cured the meat. Marcy said when she was as young as seven or eight years old, she rubbed salt in the meat until she had blisters. She explained, “You poke holes in it to get it [the salt] down to the bone. Put a layer of meat, a layer of salt.”

Marcy mentioned John Blue cookware: “There was a factory called John Blue that made cookware, cast iron products.” It started in the 1800s. During the 1940s, the war years, Marcy’s brother-in-law, Lloyd Luther Langford worked for John Blue. “He would ring a bell, which would let everyone know when it was time to work or take a break.”

**Taking a Bath.** Marcy said:

We had a wood stove that had a water tank on the side. We had an oblong tub for baths. We didn’t take a bath every night. We just washed up. We washed up as far as possible, and down as far as possible, and then, washed old possible. [She had a mischievous glint in her eye, waiting to see if the researcher was going to ask what “old possible” was.]

We heated the water in a kettle with a wooden handle. We’d hang it over the coals. Mother made a new handle for the kettle Uncle Tom Hatchett gave her.

**Well Water or Spring Water.** Marcy said:

We had a black sulfur well. It was hard to pump that water. The water tasted like rotten eggs and smelled. Some people liked it. People came from Huntsville; they had TB. They thought the water was a tonic. [They had lived there awhile before that well went dry and they drilled another.] We went down to Wes and Nancy Jacobs house to get water. There was a big spring that ran out of the mountain. Right on the edge by where it joined Lillian McDonnell’s place. We’d go down to the bottom of the hill to get the water. We’d tote lard buckets up the hill, about a quarter of a mile.

An old Black woman, “Aunt” Dump Jordan, had old cedar wooden buckets. She got water when she was washing clothes and cleaning. She put one bucket on her head and one in each hand and never moved her head. They were 2 ½ gallon buckets.

**“Aunt” Dump Jordan**

“Aunt” Dump Jordan, the Black woman who worked for the Eliffs, made “wonderful old timey egg custard.” Marcy said, “Aunt Dump would take the flour sacks and make you a top and a skirt. You thought you was uptown, out of sight!” Aunt Dump lived south of Bentley Young’s place. Marcy couldn’t remember the woman’s husband. Marcy loved

Aunt Dump. She said she once told Aunt Dump, "I'll sleep with you if you won't make me get black." She added, "Aunt Dump always made me say my prayers."

Marcy said Aunt Dump loved Mrs. Eliff more than anything:

When my Momma was sick, Aunt Dump put Momma in bed, put her in sheets and blankets and had jars with hot water. She heated rocks in the fireplace [to make the bed warm]. Momma sweated and sweated and sweated. The sheets turned green.

Aunt Dump would put Momma in a chair and push her through the house. She made double tansy tea for Momma; it's something like, maybe sage. I don't know if it was tame or wild.

### **The Store**

Every two weeks or so Marcy's father went to the store. The groceries were charged to his crop, because "poor people didn't have any money back then." We got about \$5.00 worth of groceries a month. One store her father went to was Browns, in Triana.

### **The School**

Marcy went to school in Madison. She rode on a school bus that had oilcloth windows that you pulled down. She said, "You snapped the windows down. There was an old ford to cross. We had to walk to the road to get on the bus; when it was wet, the bus would get stuck."

### **Tom Bagsby**

Marcy's father remarried after her mother died. She said: "When Daddy brought home his new bride, they found me up at a spring crying. I didn't want another mother." However, it seems Marcy adjusted. She seemed to like her stepmother's father, John Thomas (Tom) Bagsby, and she referred to him as her grandpa. He sharecropped on D.G. Foster's place (Parcel A-21). The Bagsbys lived in a two-story house. Marcy said:

They had six boys and six girls, and then he had three of each by his next wife. He had a total of eighteen children. Some died. One fell off the porch into a rain barrel and drown. His second wife was Ruth Callahan. He was a hard-shelled Baptist preacher, but he didn't preach out there on the arsenal land. His son Dan is into his 80s now (in 2001); Naomi Bagsby never married. She lives on Rison Street.

While Marcy mentioned other people, and said she would ask if they would talk with the researcher, but that was a far as it went.

Marcy said her Grandpa Bagsby raised tobacco. It was his main crop. Marcy chortled, “When we were kids, we’d roll us a cigar.” Her grandfather reserved one of the four big rooms in his house for storing the cotton or tobacco.

### **The Move**

Marcy said that when Bentley Young began selling his property, her father went to work for Lillian McDonnell (Parcel A-24) and Sara Wilson. They moved to a house on McDonnell land that had three big rooms and a front porch. She said, “It was like an ‘L’ in the back, so my daddy added two more walls and then that made another room.” A cemetery was across the road from the house. Marcy said Lillian McDonnell inherited the land from her family, and “the whole place was covered with sharecroppers. She didn’t live there; she had a fine house in town and lived with her sister.”

Marcy mentioned a neighbor who lived “up past McDonnell’s.” She pronounced his name “Jh-ro.” Marcy added that he was the father of Wynn Jones (Parcel A-13). She said:

Mr. Jones was rich. He got mad at a man who sharecropped with him, Archie Meers. He fired him. He [Meers] came back and burned the barn down. He came in drunk. He went to the pen.

### **Marcy’s Husband**

Marcy’s story about how she met her husband also adds insight to life “back then.” Marcy’s parents “took on another boy to raise.” He was the son of a family named Langford. “Mr. Langford gave my parents his second son [it is unclear from which wife] because he had fathered 23 children in three marriages.” The adopted Langford boy and Marcy later married each other.

### **Quilts**

Marcy said “back then” women made quilts. She was young when she began making quilts, over 75 years ago, and she continues to make quilts. Each one is a beautiful design with fine stitching. Some quilts she has made with her “own colors.” She said:

A real old Black lady taught me how to make colors of my own [when Marcy was young]. You dig down below the topsoil and then get the red clay. You put that in a wash pot and boil it and strain it. Then you put your material in there and put salt and vinegar in there. Then you put your quilt lining in there, and it would make an orange-yellow color for your lining. Or you could dye a bunch of different colors and make a quilt top.

Marcy sews when she is not working in her garden and “putting up” vegetables or fruit. She is a petite woman, past 90 years old, who grew up working hard and has never stopped.



The central area of Mullins Flat. The land owned by Adolphus (Darphus) Love is shown in the name of Cecelia Love McCrary. Source: Map created for the Army by Alexander Archaeological Consultants.

## **JAMES LOVE**

Born 1923

Interviews July 2005



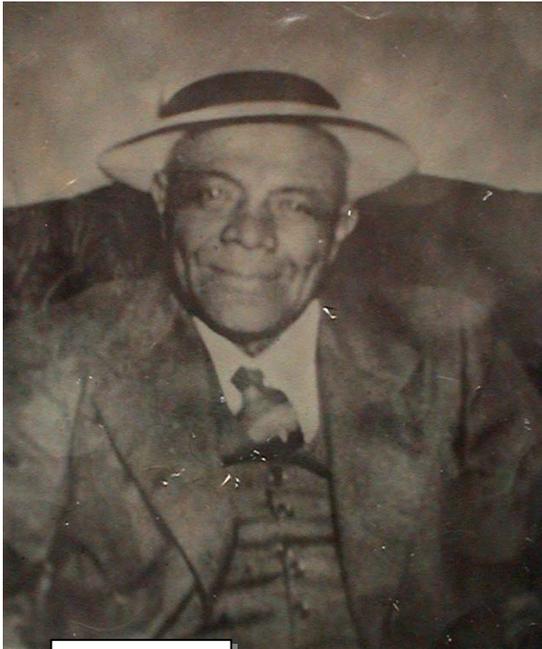
**Edna Love Sanders and her father, James Love.**

### **The Family of James Love**

James Love was interviewed in the company of his daughter, Edna Sanders Love, who is pictured with him above. Edna grew up close to her elders and family friends and has depth in her knowledge of the Mullins Flat community and the lifeways of the past. Her mother, James Love's wife, was Velma Ragland, daughter of Ernest Ragland, a sharecropper/renter in Mullins Flat.

James Love is the son of Moses Love and Beulah Smith Love. Beulah was born in about 1880, and Moses was born in Madison in about the same year. He moved to Russellville, Alabama in Franklin County and then to Arkansas where he stayed a few years and earned some money. When he returned to Madison County, he transported his belongings and cattle with him in a couple of train cars. Moses Love died in about 1950. His son said he was about 71 or 72 when he died. Moses Love owned Parcel C-131.

Moses and Beulah were married and had a number of children before Moses purchased land in Mullins Flat in about 1916. The names of the children of Moses and Beulah are: Mary Love Lightford (1900), Walter Love, Julie (next to Walter in age, died at age 12), Lawrence, Lucille Love Payton (1908), Robert Lee Love (1918), James (1920), Beulah, and David (born about 1922).



Moses Love

Moses' wife died in 1925. James said his mother and his sister Beulah and his brother David died, all within a period of months. He was not old enough to remember much about it. He barely remembers his mother Beulah. When David and his sister Beulah died, James was then the youngest child in the family.

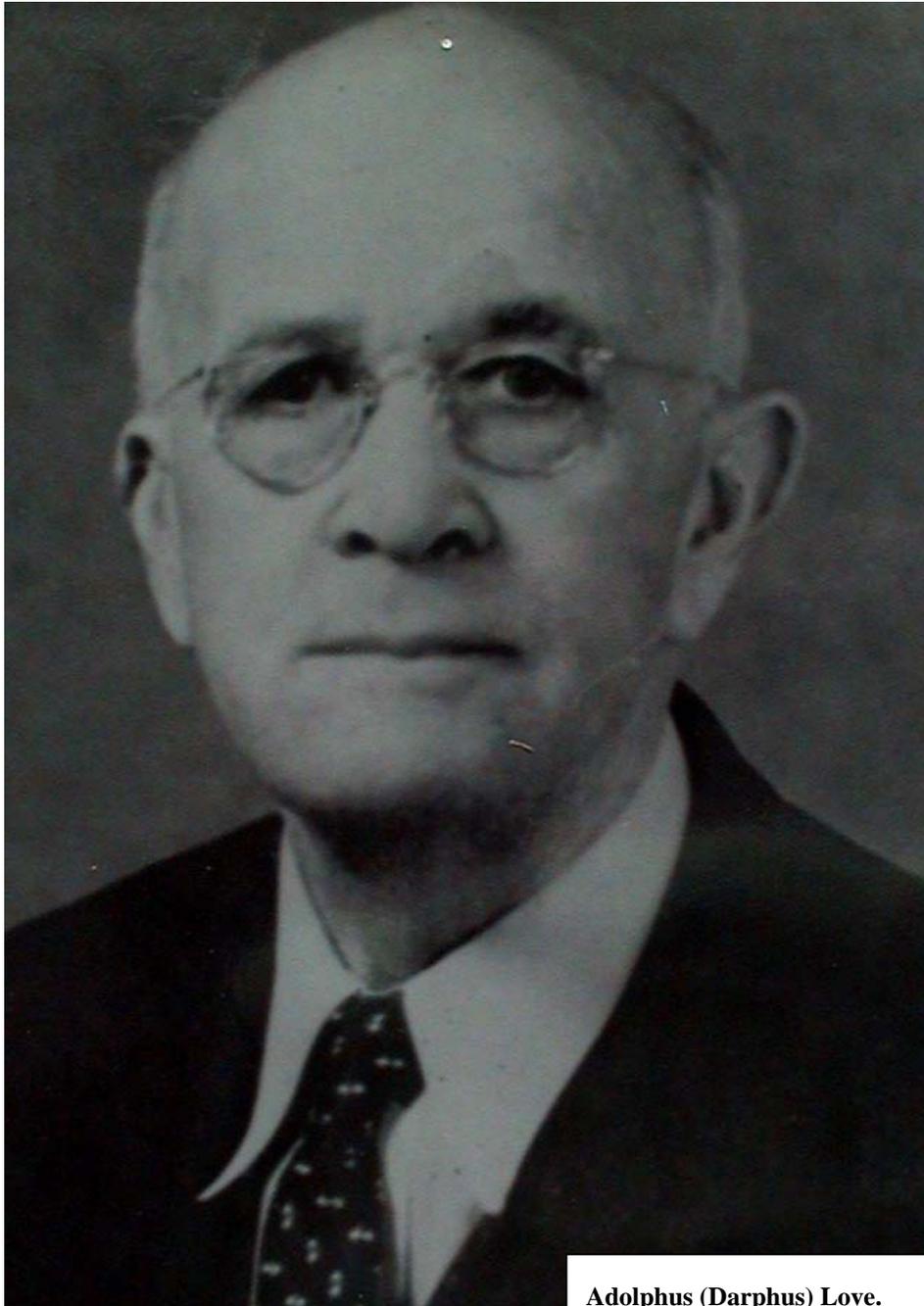
James said that Moses remarried. His second wife was Annie Crawford. No children resulted from that marriage; however, Annie had nine children of her own when she married Moses. Both Moses and Annie had children who were grown and married at the time, but the combined family was still a large one.

James said he didn't remember their house much. It had seven or eight rooms. James said he did not know if the house was built by his father or was there when his father purchased the land. It is reasonable to assume that if the house was already in existence, additional rooms were added by Moses. When asked if it was like the house his uncle Darphus (Adolphus) Love had, James said that Darphus had a better house. Moses Love's house was all one story. Darphus Love's house has been described as having a dormer window in the top, above the front door.



James' sister Lucille was born in 1908.

**Adolphus (Darphus) Love.** Adolphus Love was the brother of Moses Love. Even though his legal name was Adolphus, everyone knew him as Darphus. Some older folks hesitated when asked about Adolphus Love, as they knew him only as Darphus.



**Adolphus (Darphus) Love.**

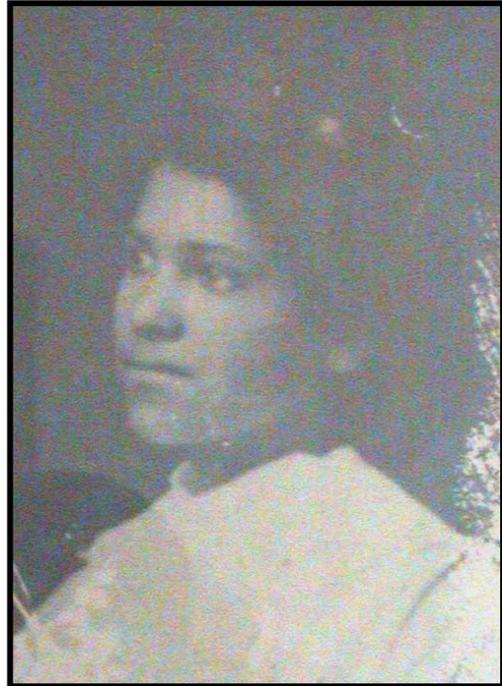
Adolphus (Darphus) was a half-brother to Moses. They had different fathers. Obviously, the father of Adolphus was a White man. Darphus Love owned the store in Mullins Flat. It is said that he gave the land for Silver Hill School.

Darphus' children were: Everett, Binford, Arley, and Lavada, and beautiful Sophie who died quite young. James Love said none of Darphus' children are alive now. Binford died an accidental death. James explained:

Binford was out hunting. He had an old gun, the kind the hammer cocked back. He went over a wire fence that had thick brush around it. The brush caught on the gun and pulled the hammer back and it went off.

It seems another possibility could have been that the gun had been cocked already and the trigger was shoved, nevertheless, Binford was killed in this accident. Everett later named a son Binford, after the brother he had lost.

Arley Love went to Cincinnati. James remembers her from when she came back to Mullins Flat to visit her parents. She never married and had a long career as a teacher in Cincinnati. Lavada Love married a man named Rice. James remembers she had a son named James Rice.



**Sophie Love. Daughter of Darphus.**

### **Life in the Community**

**People Were Self-Sufficient.** Edna Love Sanders provided memories of what she'd heard of life "back then" from her parents and grandparents. She said people knew how to do everything for themselves. The women tended big gardens, canned vegetables and fruit, made soap, made clothes from feed and fertilizer sacks, made

mattresses from corn husks and straw, and made feather tics from the soft feathers saved when plucking chickens. If they had a cow, they made butter. They canned sausage meat after hogs were butchered.

The men killed and smoked the hogs. When interviewed fifteen years ago by Pam Rogers (*The Redstone Rocket*, August 15, 1990), James Love discussed butchering hogs. He commented: "Of course we had to do that in cold weather, because there wasn't any refrigeration." He said when they did, "It [the hogs] looked like clothes hanging on a line, there were so many of them."

Edna noted that her maternal grandfather, who did not live on the land that was to become RSA, had a watercress pond, and her grandmother would cook the watercress "like you do turnip greens and collards." James said he did not know of anyone where he lived growing watercress.

**The Land and Tenants.** Moses Love owned a large parcel of land adjoining a large parcel owned by his brother Adolphus [Darphus]. James said his father had a number of tenant houses on his property. Some of James' brothers-in-law rented from his father.

James explained that if a man had his own stock and equipment, he rented. In that case he would give the landowner about one-third or one-fourth of his crop. If a man didn't own his own stock and equipment, he was a sharecropper, and he would give the landowner one-half of his crop.

Moses bought the land (C-131) where he lived and farmed from Milton Lanier. This research already has established that Milton Lanier was a large landowner, having owned land throughout the area that is now RSA, as well as areas not encompassed by the arsenal. The Laniers go back to pre-Civil War times as plantation owners, and a plantation home still exists in Madison, lived in by a Lanier family member. The farm Moses owned was called "the old Lanier place." James said that Milton Lanier was his father's attorney.

Sometime after he bought the 300-acre parcel, Moses bought a 40-acre plot down in the river bottom. Moses Love purchased 87.34 acres of bottomland from John W. Jamar, a single man, for \$2,800 on September 28, 1917.

James said that other landowners whose property was near or joined his father's plot were Paris Branford, Walter Kelly, and Walter Jacobs. James said his father had to sell this land to the government; TVA made a lot of people sell to the government. Since the government "took" this land as a required TVA sale, it is not shown on the Army Real Estate Property Map, which was drawn in conjunction to the later forced sale to the Army. However, he said it bordered the property of Walter Kelly, who may have lost some bottomland but was able to retain Parcel C-142D. The deed for the bottomland property James described is shown on the following page; the property location can be discerned by examining it.

**Crops and Farming, and the Gin.** Moses grew cotton, corn, peanuts, and cane. Most of the 300-acre parcel that Moses Love owned was planted in cotton. While discussing crops, James said that his father liked to invest. Moses owned four stock certificates in the Longview Gin Company downtown in Huntsville. The gin was located not far from Hall Street. During the course of talking with other Pond Beat and Mullins Flat inhabitants, the researcher was told that many Black people went together and started their own gin.

James said both his father and his Uncle Darphus had cattle. In the wintertime when they were not farming, James said most people let the cattle run around loose. However, his daddy put a fence up for theirs.

James said it was "a good ways" to the field down in the river bottom. The field had rich soil and was right next to the "river" (shown on the Army Real Estate Map as Wheeler Reservoir). Moses raised corn there. James said, "Sometimes five or six men would be working down there, plowing or pulling corn back and forth to the house" (to Moses Love's home). Moses had men who worked for him, but his sons worked for him, too.



occasion when he stayed out very late at night, he would feed the stock **before** he went to bed!

When the horses were working in the field, they had to be fed three times a day, just like people. In the winter, when they weren't working, they were fed twice a day. When the horses were working down by the river, their food had to be delivered to them, just as it was to the people. Sometimes corn or hay was put on the ground for them, but other times their food was in the wagon bed, and the horses would be tied around the wagon to have their lunch.

At mealtime, about 11:30 or 12 o'clock, someone brought the food down from the house to the men. What they were brought for lunch varied. They might have fried corn, potatoes, cake, bread or whatever the cook prepared.

**Mills.** The cane was taken "north of where they lived" to either the gin run by Jesse Penny and his son James or to the one owned by Manuel Wilbert. They were about a mile away. The Loves and those who took their cane to these mills took the cane and piled it up. They had to haul their own wood to the mill site and stack it up. The mill owner and his hands and/or family members would feed the cane through the mill as the donkey or horse went around causing the stones to thrash the cane. A pan caught the liquid. James said:

They lit a fire under the pan that was maybe 7 or 8 feet long and 3 or 4 feet wide, as best as I can remember. That was a long time ago. When it was done, they would drain it off into a 55-gallon barrel. We'd carry the barrel home, turn it over on one side, and use a funnel to drain it off into gallon buckets.

**Hunting and Fishing.** James said the men in his family hunted but didn't fish much. They hunted rabbits and squirrels. When James was a boy, he went out with the dogs. The dogs would run down rabbits and sometimes catch them. When he was older, he was allowed to use a gun, however, he still took the dogs, and sometimes they'd catch a rabbit.

**Doctors.** When Julia Love was 12 years old, she became very ill and was taken to Dr. Beard. The doctor gave her some medicine, but "it had an ill effect." Julia died in the wagon on the way home. Dr. Beard was a Black doctor. Beard Street on 10<sup>th</sup> Calvary Hill was named after him. His daughter, Caroline Metcalf, was a schoolteacher. The Love family later went to Dr. Scruggs.

**Main Cause of Death.** James said "malaria would go around pretty bad," but the main cause of death was pneumonia and TB, "probably pneumonia was the main cause, because when people got it, many died of it."

**Funeral Home.** James acknowledged that in those days some people did not take the body of their deceased family member to a funeral home; the body was taken home for

preparation for burial. However, the Love family used the Royal Funeral home. At that time, the Royal Funeral Home was “uptown” on Holmes Street. The Royal Funeral Home, run by James Jones, is still in existence today, although the location changed, and it is on Ardmore Highway. The Royal Funeral Home was for Black people, as Whites had their own funeral homes.

**Cemetery.** James was five years old when his mother died in 1925. Moses buried his wife in the cemetery that was on his land.

James said the cemetery where Moses buried his wife was “in back of our house.” The Army gave this cemetery the name Jordan Cemetery, based on the name(s) on cemetery markers. James said the cemetery was on the land when his father bought it. White people had been buried there in the past. Those Moses buried there were:

Beulah Love (his wife), Julia Florence Love (his daughter who died at age 12), his son David (who James said was born in 1922 and was really young when he died), and his daughter Beulah (named after her mother). James said his father “would let other people be buried there” as well.

John Rankin provided a photograph of one of the grave markers in Jordan Cemetery. He refers to them as “funeral home markers” as they were provided by the funeral homes and are common. Some of the numbers on them are discernible. Since the funeral homes keep records, it is possible that the name of the person interred could be learned from funeral home records. The researcher had noted that Royal Funeral Home was the one most people who were Black said they used.

The reader will recall that James was only five years old when his mother was buried—the first entry of a Black person in the White cemetery. When asked if the Royal Funeral Home was patronized only by Blacks, he answered that it was, and at the same time commented that Blacks and Whites “were not buried in the same cemeteries either.” In fact, they may have been in some cases, but it was probably the result of Blacks purchasing land previously owned by White settlers. This could also explain why a cemetery might be found to have different names, each reflecting a particular period in time.

**School.** James went to Silverhill School. His favorite teacher married Mr. Jamar, who was the principal at the school. James said she was his favorite teacher because when he was a little boy, he would cry sometimes, and the teacher would be nice to him and “kind

Typical funeral home grave marker. Photograph by John P. Rankin.



of pet him.” When asked if one could say he was the “teacher’s pet,” James smiled and nodded, saying he guessed you could.

Most of the children carried their lunch to school, but James lived close by, so he went home for lunch. “Sometimes children would buy something off the rolling truck for lunch, like an apple or cookies, but,” James noted, “money was a scanty.”

Moses and other parents took turns cutting wood and taking it to the school. “Winters were colder back then,” James said. When the snow came, it would melt quickly in the high places, but in low spots and under the trees, it might stay on the ground for three weeks. Wood was always kept on hand to warm the school. The parents would haul the cut timber to the school in a wagon. The older boys stacked the timber and later cut it to size and carried it into the school building so there was always a ready wood supply for the woodstove.

Moses helped in building the school. James is not sure if his Uncle Darphus donated the land for the school, but the land for it is cut out of the parcel Darphus owned. It is speculated that Darphus may have donated the land as a match for the Rosenthal grant for building the school, because Darphus was known to be a big-hearted man.

**Store.** Moses Love’s house (C-131) was between the school and the store. James said their house was “kind of angling across from” the school. Darphus (Adolphus) Love, brother of Moses, owned the store. The properties of Moses and Darphus (shown in the name of Celia McCrary Love) adjoined. James said the store was a separate structure from that of his Uncle Darphus’ house, but “you could pitch a rock from one to the other.” A wood stove was used to heat the store in winter. James explained that the store wasn’t fancy, but it was considered nicer than some of the other small stores of its type.

The “storekeeper” on duty would be one of a number of people, sometimes Alzina, Everett’s wife, sometimes Everett, and sometimes “one of the hands.” Alzina’s tenure in storekeeping ended when she and Everett separated.

The store had the staples—flour, sugar, meal, and pork meat. Syrup (molasses) was sold in cans. They had canned mackerel and other things, such as candy. No clothes were sold. James said, “mostly people bought from the peddler truck [the rolling store] that went through.” While James emphasized that Darphus didn’t “give food away,” he sometimes would give some meat or other food to less fortunate elders.

**Churches.** Moses Love went to the Grange Church, which was a Methodist Church. The Grange Church and the Center Grove church down in Pond Beat had the same preacher. When the preacher would go to one church, somebody would substitute at the other. When the land went to the Army, the two churches combined and built a church on Ardmore Highway. James said some people attended a church in Farley. It was called the Antioch Church. James said, “It was there in Farley [on South Memorial Parkway] until recently, but they didn’t have many go there so they moved [probably

joined with others] to build a new church on Oakwood Avenue, not far from the Royal Funeral Home.”

When asked if people dressed up to go to church, James said many people did not have clothes to “dress up.” However, they didn’t look like they did when they came out of the field. James said, “They always had their clothes washed and were clean.”

**Baptism.** James said:

People were baptized in any good little clear spot they could find on the creek or river. The woods were thick back then. People would have their “uniforms” [robes?] on and then one crew would carry them down to be baptized and another would escort them back after they were baptized. They could either step back in the woods to change to something dry or wait. For the baptizing, the minister would put a hand over the face and one behind the back, and the person would be dipped down in the water.

**Blacksmith.** James said his father usually took the horses to town to be “shoed”(shod), but he knew of one man who had a blacksmith shop over in the Center Grove Church area. His name was Lawrence Goldsmith. He had one on his farm. (This name was not on the Army Real Estate Map at the time of land sale.) It was run by a Black man who worked for him whose name was Lacy Davis. Lacy was “real light skinned. He looked almost like a White person.” James said in later years he and Lacy worked together on the arsenal. He said he thought there might have been another blacksmith in Pond Beat on the same road as Horton School. (Alva Jacobs, who grew up along that road, did not remember one.) When asked if he meant Sam Harris, James said no. The fact that Harris had a blacksmith shop does not mean he did work for others. Frank Jacobs had a blacksmith shop on his farm, but here again, this does not mean he did work for others. James may have been thinking of the blacksmith at the intersection of the Farley-Triana Road and Whitesburg Pike, which was near Pond Beat.

**Social Interaction.** James said that everyone helped each other. “They all got along pretty good.” In regard to interaction between Blacks and Whites, James said most of the people in their community were Black. His daughter pointed out that most of the people her father’s age did not comment about it much, because their generation was “not far down from slavery.” However, she pointed out that they “felt” things. For example, how do you suppose her grandfather, Moses Love, a landowner who was respected in Mullins Flat, felt when he went to Huntsville and had to step off the sidewalk to let any White man walk by. Edna’s comments serve as an excellent example of oral history passed down. After she spoke, her father took up what she’d said. James Love said:

My daddy had property and was respected as much as a Black man could be. He’d go to town, and any White man, when he got to be a certain age, even an old scroungie White man, that walked by, my daddy would have to step off [the sidewalk] in the street for him. My daddy had to call him “Mr.,” but he’d call my daddy Moses.

But my daddy was treated better than his daddy was. His daddy was just out of slavery.

Edna made the point that “back in those days” Black people knew what behavior was expected of them and there would be consequences if they did not conform, but that did not mean that they did not feel rage inside. Edna speculated that the shouting Black Churches might have developed because it was the only way Black people had to vent their rage.

Speaking of the race issue caused James to recall when “Old Man [Dave] Barley [Parcel D-173 in Pond Beat], got a White sharecropper on his land, in other words, poor White man moved on a Black man’s farm.” Barley got anonymous intimidating letters about it in his mailbox. He got on his horse and went to all those he thought might be writing the letters and asked them about it. Nobody said anything else about it.

The researcher did not think to ask Mr. Love if the neighbors that Barley thought might be writing the letters were Black or White. However, James Love’s knowing about this incident shows that even in the days when transportation by horse or foot was predominant, people knew what was going on across the communities. James Love lived in Mullins Flat and Dave Barley was down in Pond Beat, his property bordering the Farley-Triana Road. However, it is probable that they had a relative or two in common. It has been ascertained that Dave Barley was a well-known Black man [who was said by one person interviewed to look almost like a white man] and was spoken of respectfully and said to be “a good man” by many people, both Black and White.

**Christmas.** James remembered Christmastime as being very enjoyable. For three or four days around Christmas, people would visit each other. Everyone offered food to guests. James said sometimes people they visited were less fortunate than his family and didn’t have enough food to be offering it—even though they always did—so he would decline to eat but enjoy the visit.

James said that his mother baked all year, but she really baked at Christmastime. They had what they called a trunk. James said,

It was pretty deep, 3 or 4 feet long, and 2 or 3 feet wide. Sometimes mother almost filled it with cakes and pies. We’d didn’t eat them all at once, but would take them out and get a slice as we wanted.

James said children got toys for Christmas. When asked what kind, he replied, “Well, you might get a B.B. rifle.” The researcher commented that some people got smaller gifts, small items from the 10-cent store, and James said, “There wasn’t a lot of money stirring, but you could buy something right smart for a dollar.”

**Toys.** To do it justice, this story must be presented as it was related. It shall be called:

## **The Story of the B.B. Rifle**

My daddy had a B.B. rifle. When I was big enough, I got to shoot it. My brothers would load it for me. One time I got shot in my finger. To load it, you put the B.B.'s in and then you had to rock it back and forth to pump it up and build enough pressure to shoot the B.B.'s out. My older brother loaded it up. You had to hold one hand on the end of the barrel when you shook it. I got in a hurry and shot the end of my finger. It wasn't bad, but enough to carry me to the doctor. Daddy got angry and broke the stock of the rifle, but he bought another the same day.

James described toys boys made. Pistols were cut out of a piece of wood. They were just cut in the shape of a pistol, and we would run around pretending to shoot. They made "flips" (slingshots). To make the flip, a "string" (of rubber) was tied to each end of a forked stick. The string could be cut from an old inner tube. "You'd trim it down kind of slim." The piece tied to the string to hold the projectile was usually made by cutting a piece from the tongue of an old leather shoe. Then you would "stretch the rubber back and put in a gravel or a marble." The researcher questioned the use of a marble, wondering if the boys would want to lose their marbles. James said the marble wouldn't go far, maybe 20 or 30 feet, and if the land was cleared, the boys could go pick them up.

**Lodges.** James did not belong to a lodge, but two of his brothers belonged to a Masonic Lodge and had been Wishful Masters. His father had also been a Mason. James explained that members were divided into groups and each group had a Wishful Master. Since he had not been a member, he did not know much about it. The Center Grove and the Grange Church each had a lodge by them. Some churches were used for lodge meetings, which took place during the week, at night.

**The Fair in Huntsville.** The White people usually held the fair around the 15th of October. In the next two weeks, after the White fair was over, the Blacks would have their fair. It was down off Wheeler Street, where Books a Million is, at University and Pulaski Pike. It was a county fair, with 4-H, animals, FFA giving prizes for the best animals, vegetables, etc.

## **Leaving Their Home**

James said even before their land was sold to the Army, the Army had started to build. Gates, manned by guards, were put up to close off the roads. The residents who hadn't moved yet had to stop at the gates each time they went in and out.

When families left, they took their stock and possessions. Moses Love bought 280 acres north of Huntsville at 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Hill. This hill is where the Black Buffalo Soldiers camped (Civil War). James said "piled up dirt from their camp" (palisade) was still there when his father bought the land. James said Moses "tore up" a couple of the houses that were on his land in Mullins Flat, moved them, and rebuilt them on the land he bought.

# ARTHUR JORDAN

Interview May 2005

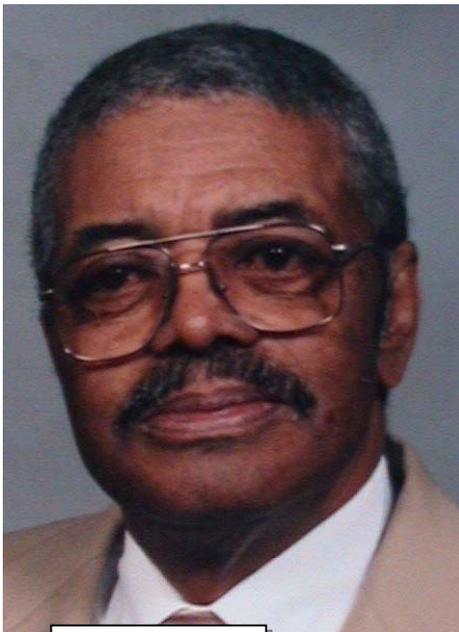
Arthur Jordan was born December 10, 1926. He is a widower now. His first wife was Millie Draper and his second wife was Zera Pompei.

Brothers and Sisters: Nina McDaniels (C-142A), Odell, Bertha Cox, Elizabeth Cooper Langford, and James.

Arthur's father, Newman Jordan, was a minister in Triana for 37 years. He was born in 1899 and died when he was 105. Newman Jordan's parents were James Jordan and Elizabeth Jordan.



Arthur Jordan, August 1927



Arthur Jordan

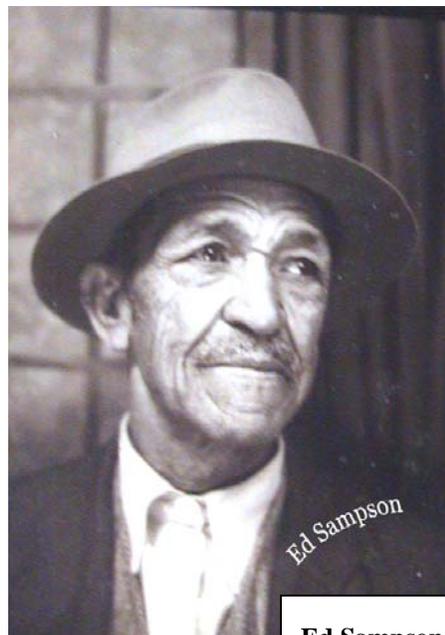
Arthur's mother was Estella Lewis Jordan. Estella's parents died when she was about 11 years old. She was raised by her Aunt Ada Sampson and her husband Ed. Ada's maiden name was Lewis. She died sometime after World War II. The Lewis family all lived on the land that is now RSA.

Arthur said Ed Sampson was his great uncle by marriage. He said that the "by marriage" part didn't make any difference to a boy growing up. Thinking of "Great Uncle Ed" brought a smile to Arthur.



Among the photos he saved, Arthur had one of another person from the community, Nora Knox.

Nora Knox.



Ed Sampson.



**James and Elizabeth Jordan. Parents of Newman Jordan, who was born in 1899. They were Arthur's grandparents.**

## **Where He Lived**

Arthur said his grandparents, James and Elizabeth, had twelve children. Some of them died. Those he named were: James, Jr., Lankford, Nina (the oldest), Gertrude (who married a Burns), Odell (who married a Payne), Elizabeth, and Newman (his father).

Arthur said the land where his grandfather lived was owned by Otis McDaniels. While Francis Horton (wife of the Everett T. ["T."] Horton) owned a large number of acres in Mullins Flat on what is now the north side of Martin Road, she also owned land further south, just north of Huntsville Spring Branch and west of what is now Dodd Road (C-140). She sold a parcel adjoining her land there to Nina McDaniels (C-142A). It is reasonable to assume that this is the property that Arthur thought was owned by Otis, because Nina McDaniels was his mother.

**The Neighbors.** Arthur could not place the land where he lived with his great aunt and uncle; however, he said it was near Walter Jacobs and Darphus Love in Mullins Flat. He remembers the nice stucco house Frank Jacobs had. He said Frank's brother Gene also had one like that. Morris Jordan had a frame house. He grew cotton, and his oldest son Herbert helped him. Arthur commented, "Everybody grew cotton. Everybody was poor."

Arthur remembered Paris Branford (Parcel C-130). Paris had a big house. Arthur said Paris was "so stingy that he would screech when he walked." He had a nice house and a nice car, and "for mattresses, corn shucks." Arthur explained that poor people would stuff cotton in the mattress. He said Paris' wife would drive the car when she went up to Merrimac to sell eggs and butter, and Paris would charge her for the gas.

## **Daily Life**

**Crops.** Arthur emphasized that almost everyone grew cotton. When asked about peanuts, he said there was no market for peanuts. People took their corn to Bates mill in Triana.

**Cooking.** Arthur commented:

Sometimes the kitchen wasn't built onto the house and sometimes people might not have a kitchen. If they cooked beans, they put them on a rack over the fireplace. If they were making some hominy, some used to cook in a wash pot that you boiled in [over the fire]. People made soap in that pot, too. It was used for everything.

Some people grew peanuts for themselves. If people wanted to parch them, they would hang them up over the fireplace. If they were shelled, they were put in the oven of the wood stove.

**Church.** Hezekiah Lanier (grandfather of McKinley Jones) was pastor of the church that Arthur attended (Missionary Baptist). Arthur Jordan said:

I remember Hezekiah Lanier preaching. He had a loose bench. He'd have his foot on that bench and be rocking that bench. We called his wife Ms. Lan, short for Lanier.

I remember one day when there was a storm and the backwater came up. There were wagons in those days. Not too many cars. Hezekiah was trying to get up in the backwater. The water washed the bed off the wagon. He was down in the water hanging on the limb. Trees had washed across the creek. He couldn't get out of there. He saw me and said, "Good morning, thank God!"

I said, "I'm going to get somebody to help you out of there." And he said, "No, you just get down here and stay with me until this water goes down."

Arthur said his Aunt Gertrude Jordan married Hezekiah's nephew, Edward Lanier.

Arthur went to church picnics at the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church located on the west side of what is now Anderson Road, which is the same church McKinley Jones attended (see McKinley Jones interview). What Arthur remembered most about those picnics was the ice cream. He said:

They had a freezer [hand turned ice cream freezer] and made ice cream. Every time I went there they were filling my bowl up. I thought there was nothing better in the world than ice cream. But I ate so much it made me sick. I don't eat it now.

**School.** Arthur's father "paid some" on the rent of his sister Gertrude's house north of Huntsville. During the school year Arthur lived with her so he could go to Councill High. There were five of them in the house—Gertrude and her husband and the kids. Councill High had grades 1 through 12.

**Folk Medicine.** The researcher commented that people used to make some medicines of their own, and asked if Arthur could remember any his aunt made. Arthur replied:

Momma gave me Caster Oil. She said you'd keep that down, but it came out. Daddy threatened me [said he had to take the Caster Oil], and then he'd say, "Want some Coke? Yeah, you want some." He knew I liked Coke.

He put Caster Oil in the Coke. It came out. They seemed to give it for anything. A bad cold, anything. It would grip you, make your stomach hurt.

They'd give you anything they thought would help you. The Black Draught. They bought it at the drug store. The traveling man didn't sell anything but what was colored water—Hadacol. He made a million out of it.

Once they thought I had the whooping cough. A lady my mother knew said, "That boy got the whooping cough; give him some cow shit tea."

Another man, Press Toney, he had roots. He had a sack of roots people bought. Imagine it helped a lot of them.

**Cemetery.** Fennell Cemetery was about two miles from where Arthur lived. He said Loves and Bransfords were buried there. His daddy's sister, Odell Jordan Payne is buried there.

**Social Interaction.** Arthur said:

Everybody was poor, so they didn't know they was poor. People would help you. You got sick, people would cook, clean your house, help you however they could.

Arthur commented: "Huntsville wasn't no size. You could throw a dime across it and get change."

## **Moonshine**

Arthur's comments about moonshine are best said in his own words:

People were making moonshine. Every time the police went out, they would tear up the still they found. They would go in shooting. We [Arthur and his buddies] knew who was making some [moonshine]. We let them make a run [make some moonshine], about enough for us. We went in shooting. They thought it was the police. We took all the shine and left the still. It [the "shine"] was white lightning.

Most of the stills were in the thick woods. They'd put the mash up and let it set. It would come out in a stream of pure alcohol. They had to cut it down because it was 100 percent and would kill you.

I had a friend whose uncle made moonshine. It was his still we went to [and acted like the police]. A cow got in there one night. The cow wasn't fenced in. They let the cows out and they went where they wanted to. They set the mash up and let it ferment in wooden barrels. When it was time to cook it, they'd build a fire at night. It comes off in pure steam.

Well, the cow got in. There's no top on the barrel when the mash sets up, so the cow just drank [Arthur laughed and shook his head].

The researcher said if the barrels had no tops, it seemed like other things would get in the mash. To this, Arthur replied:

They'd be pushing out frogs and other things. Cow flies. Push 'em back. You'd put it in whatever you had—lard buckets, whatever. Women, men, and preachers filled their containers.

### **Leaving Mullins Flat**

Arthur said:

I went out to get a job [at the arsenal]. They wouldn't hire me because they said I had no "classification." We registered to get a classification and we got our first inquiry from the Government: Report to the nearest induction center. I got a questionnaire and sent it in and the next one I got was "Greetings from the President of the United States."

Arthur said you could "pick your service," and he chose the Coast Guard. Arthur was on a troop transport, the U.S.S. General Robert L. Howze, manned by the Coast Guard and the U.S. Marines. The war years took him to New Guinea, and he earned the rank of Petty Officer. One of his duties, as ordered, was to lock all the hatches if the ship took a hit. Fortunately, Arthur Jordan never had to do that, but it is evident that that task worried him more than did coming in harm's way himself, as he said, emotion still in his voice 60 years later, "How was I going to lock up those men I'd been knowing?"

## ROOSEVELT LOVE

(Born 1925 or 1926)

Interviewed by Skip Vaughn

Roosevelt Love was interviewed by Skip Vaughn. The interview was printed in the *Redstone Rocket*, July 2, 1980. While Roosevelt said his mother was from Mullins Flat, many of the elderly people from both Mullins Flat and Pond Beat who were interviewed remembered him and Jesse Penny, his grandfather. Some said they took their cane to Jesse, and he made molasses for them.

Love did not mention his mother's or his grandmother's name in Vaughn's interview. The researcher learned from people she interviewed that his mother's name was Lola. Emma Penny was Jessie Penny's wife "by second marriage." Since those who knew Jessie were speaking of the same time period Roosevelt was describing in the interview with Vaughn, it is reasonable to assume that it was Emma who was the "grandmom."

Some of the people the researcher interviewed from Mullins Flat said they walked up to Elko to catch the train when they wanted to go to Huntsville. Roosevelt Love's interview reveals another location for catching the train (which was called the "Old Joe Wheeler")—where the Space and Rocket Center is today, on Highway 20."

The text of the article written by Skip Vaughn is presented verbatim below.

**"My roots are here, man," *The Redstone Rocket*, July 2, 1980.**

Roosevelt Love pointed out where an old log cabin used to stand on land that his grandfather sharecropped.

Across the street near that Martin Road-Mills Road intersection is an old graveyard [shown as Fennil Cemetery on the Redstone Arsenal Cemetery Map] where some of his relatives are buried. A boyhood friend who lived nearby, died at an early age.

Love, 54, a counselor in the arsenal's drug and alcohol rehabilitation program (Human Resources and Development Services), remembers life as it was before this land became Redstone Arsenal.

He was born off what is now four-laned Martin Road. His father died and his mother took him to Tennessee, then sent him back for his grandparents to raise when he was five. They lived and



Roosevelt Love visiting his family cemetery on Redstone Arsenal in 1980. Source: *The Redstone Rocket*, July 2, 1980.

farmed in a predominately black community called Mullins Flat.

“One thing I guess I can appreciate my granddad and grandmom for is they didn’t have a formal education but made sure I went to school,” Love said.

He attended the first through the third grades at Silver Hill School off what is now Dodd Road in the area of the historic Redstone test site on Dodd Road.

His mother’s parents sharecropped on about 20 to 30 acres. They farmed cotton, corn, vegetables, potatoes and made molasses, brooms and chair bottoms, Love recalls.

His grandfather, Jessie Penny, was “probably the next to the last person to give up the horse and buggy. He drove that horse and buggy till he got too old,” Love said.

Peddlers, called “rolling stores”, would come by once a week to sell household goods, candy and gum. Love would walk the approximately two miles to school which lasted from morning to noon. “We moved several times but most times in the general area,” he said.

They first moved to near where the post airfield stands today and would walk Saturdays to “where the Space and Rocket Center is on Highway 20, caught a train—the “Old Joe Wheeler”—into town, and rode back in the afternoon.” The trip cost a dime.

“I farmed till I was 13, then I felt it was time to give it up, and I left the farm and moved into the city,” Love said. He

moved back with his mother in Huntsville.

His mother, a native of Mullins Flat, had been working in Chattanooga where her sister lived. Her parents left Mullins Flat before the army came, Love said.

He recalls how his grandfather would drop him off in the nearby black community of Pond Beat so Love could visit his father’s parents.

His father’s parents lived in Pond Beat, located to the south of Mullins Flat in the area of where Building 7100 stands, until after the Army arrived, Love said.

Love went on to graduate from Council High School and Alabama A&M University. He worked 10 years with the Huntsville Parks and Playgrounds Department and two and a half years as a juvenile probation officer for Madison County Family Court before coming to Redstone in 1972.

He has a married son and married daughter and lives in Huntsville with his wife Helen.

“My roots are here, man,” he said [while on Redstone Arsenal].

## **HODIE LANIER MCGRAW**

**Interview dates: Feb. 13 and March 20, 2001.**



**Hodie Lanier McGraw and her husband.**

### **The Lanier Family**

Hodie McGraw was born March 6, 1922. She had one sister, Etta Kate Lanier Maynor. Her Mother was Etta P. Lacy Lanier and her father was Jeremiah Lanier who was the son of Austin Lanier. His brothers were Willie, Frank, Edward, and Austin, Jr.

Hodie was five years old when her mother, Etta Lacy, died. When her mother passed away, her father, Jeremiah Lanier, worked in Huntsville, for the Alabama Grocery Company on Jefferson Street. Hodie went to live with her mother's parents, Wyatt and Kate Lacy, and her father lived with his sister and her husband on Brown Street so he would be closer to where he worked. He remarried when Hodie was nine years old, and she went to live with him. She has a younger brother, born after her father remarried. His name is Odysseus Lanier. Hodie's father and Felix Lanier's father were brothers. (See Felix Lanier interview.)

**The Lanier Relatives.** Hodie's father, Jeremiah Lanier, had a brother named Willie (born in 1883). The son of Willie Lanier and Mary McCrary (ca. 1880), Felix Lanier, was interviewed for this study.

Hodie said Willie Lanier lived "right behind us--you turned down a lane and went back down there to get to Uncle Willie's house." Since Felix has said his father lived on Lanier land, it was speculated that she was referring to Parcel C-146. This speculation proved to be correct as Hodie went on to say that "the Jacobs lived back up in there," and further scrutiny of the Army Real Estate Map revealed that Burrell J. Jacobs owned the parcel (C-145) between Wyatt Lacy (C-144) and Milton H. Lanier (C-146). This deductive reasoning is the basis for asserting that C-144 was the particular parcel of Wyatt Lacy-owned land where he had his home.

**Jacobs Neighbors of the Laniers.** Hodie went on to say that Bubba Jacobs and his mother lived back there, but she couldn't remember his mother's name. She said:

Mrs. Jacobs wore long dresses that came to the tops of her high-topped shoes. We called her Aunt Kitty, Kitty Jacobs. But I'm not sure if that was her real name. Felix [Lanier] would know, because he lived back up in there.



**Hodie McGraw through the years.**

## The Lacy Family

**Lacy Ancestry.** Hodie was told by her aunt that Wyatt Lacy was born on January 12, 1867. She stated that he was “born free.” Wyatt’s father descended from one of the three Lacey brothers who came from England to America where they purchased the land south of the Tennessee River that came to known as Lacey Springs. Hodie thought her great grandfather, James, came to America during “slave times.” Hodie’s aunt told her that her grandfather’s mother, Priscilla (wife of James), came on a boat.

Hodie said the 1910 census, District 8 Sheet 11, Enumeration District 111, listed Wyatt Lacy as being 45 years old and a farmer. Wyatt’s household included: Kate (age 47, housekeeper), Cora L. (age 19), Etta P. (age 17), Pearl L. (age 13), Amanda E. (age 12), and Lawrence (age 8). Wyatt’s daughter Cora married Charles Burns (see Charles Burns section).

The 1880 Madison County census lists the members of the James Lacy household. James was Wyatt’s father.

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Census Place: Township 5, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 137C

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>James LACY</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>MU</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>AL</b>
Prissilla LACY	Wife	F	M	MU	39	AL
Nellie LACY	Dau	F	S	MU	18	AL
Wyatt LACY	Son	M	S	MU	14	AL
Amanda LACY	Dau	F	S	MU	12	AL
Margaret LACY	Dau	F	S	MU	10	AL
Francis LACY	Dau	F	S	MU	8	AL
Thomas LACY	Son	M	S	MU	6	AL
Edith LACY	Dau	F	S	MU	4	AL
Russel LOWE	Other	M	M	B	41	AL
Flora LOWE	Other	F	M	B	29	AL
Anna LOWE	Other	F	S	B	8	AL
Sophia LOWE	Other	F	S	B	6	AL
Matilda LACY	Mother	F	W	MU	60	AL

**The 1880 Madison County Census listing the family of James Lacy.**

The 1880 census categorized all of the Lacy members of the household of James Lacy as being Mulatto. The census shows James was 40 years old, putting his birth year at 1840. This is consistent with the oral history passed down to Hodie that he came to America during slave times, and the fact that he was classified as “Mulatto.” The last person listed in the census record is Matilda Lacy, who is listed as “mother.” Matilda is categorized as a Mulatto, and being 60 years old at the time of the census, which would indicate she was born in 1820. This would suggest that Hodie’s great grandmother was associated with the Lacey family in Virginia, prior to their move to Alabama.

**Remembering Wyatt Lacy.** Hodie obviously cherished the memory of her grandfather. She remembered when he passed away in 1951. She said, “They came to get him in a white coach.” She said he’d lived a long life. She had a copy of his obituary, which stated:

Wyatt Lacy became a Christian in 1887, at Cedar Grove Methodist Church [Mullins Flat]. Later he went to Lakeside. Two daughters are Mrs. Cora Burns, Mrs. Amanda Burns; one son, Lawrence Lacy; 4 sisters and 1 brother, 19 grandchildren, and 16 great grandchildren.

The funeral was held at the Royal Funeral Home, with the Reverend Mr. D. G. Toney and the Reverend Mr. J. H. Bridges presiding.

**Timmons Ancestry.** Hodie’s maternal grandmother, Kate Joiner Lacy, was born February 13, 1864. She died May 10, 1934, nine years after her daughter Etta died (Etta was Hodie’s mother). Hodie said her grandmother Kate had been born a slave. Kate’s mother had “worked in the plantation house.” Hodie also said that her Grandmother Kate’s brothers were Luther Joiner, Alex Joiner, and John Joiner.

Hodie’s naming of her Grandmother Kate’s brothers was the connecting piece that enabled the researcher to identify Kate as Alex Joiner’s sister. During prior interviews, the researcher had learned that Alex had two brothers and their names, but she hadn’t learned about Kate. Another piece was added to the family name chart of the Joiners descended from William Timmons (White) and Luisa (slave). When Kate’s husband, Wyatt Lacy was included beside her on the chart, another piece of information became apparent. The children of Kate and Wyatt Lacy had English ancestors on both sides of the family.

### **Where Wyatt Lacy Lived**

**The Parcel Location.** On the Army Real Estate Map, the property where Wyatt Lacy lived is shown as C-145. Property to the northwest owned by Francis Horton is shown as C-140. Between these two parcels, a very small parcel (C-142) is shown as owned by Amanda Lightford. The property bordering hers to the north is shown as owned by Sledge Crutcher (C-141). Descendants of the Crutcher name are known to be present in Huntsville today, but the time limitations of this research did not allow for pursuing that line of inquiry.

Property changed hands throughout the years between 1880 and 1941 when the property map was made, but it is speculated that the land between Wyatt Lacy and Francis Horton was in the family because Hodie referred to “up on the hill” as if it were family property beyond her grandfather’s house. She referred to the cemetery up on the hill and noted that babies who died and some other family members were buried there. The closest cemetery is to the west, a niche out of the western boundary of the Crutcher property (C-141). It is listed by the Army as “Unnamed Cemetery.” A very short distance from it, in

the southeast corner of the Francis Horton parcel (C-140), is the Lanier Cemetery (White).

**Wyatt Lacy's House (C-144).** Hodie described her grandfather's house, which he built:

It was on a hill and it was white, because it was whitewashed sometimes. It was a frame house with a tin roof. It had a big living room and an old-fashioned bed with headboards. And there was a hallway the whole way through from the front door to the back, and you would go out to a big back porch.

When you went down the hallway, the first room you would go to would be the living room. And then there was another bedroom. There were two big beds with headboards and there was one on each side of the room with a hearth in between. There was also a window. The beds were double beds with posts. They also had a sewing machine. It was near the window.

In the living room there was a rocking chair along with the beds. There was also a door that led to the back room and right beside the wall there was a half bed. And grandmother kept a bunch of food in there, too.

And there was a door that led to the back porch. The porch ran the whole way around the house. When you followed the hallway to the back porch, you would go out into the kitchen. The kitchen was connected to the house by the porch. The kitchen had a big old wood stove. You could open it up [a compartment] and put water in there to heat up for hot water. There was a roof overhang, with the kitchen being a separate building. The kitchen had two windows. The kids could go up under the house and play [under the porch].

Outside of the house there was a pasture with lots of trees, where grandfather would let the horses graze. There was a field just before the road. The road led from the house all the way down. There was also a building like a garage where he [grandfather] kept a car and an old buggy. He bought a new car when I was about five years old [1927].

Hodie also said there was a pond and a barn a few blocks from the house, and a smaller house was down from the barn. She had said her grandfather lived in a smaller house in his elderly years, so this may have been the house. She said that the car garage that held the car was down from that.

**Nearby Relatives.** Margaret Lacy Davidson on Parcel D-186 was Wyatt Lacy's sister. Miles Shields resided on Parcel C-187. He married Hodie's grandmother's sister's niece, Nina Joiner.

**Walter Kelley's House.** Walter Kelley lived on Parcel C-142. It was a white frame house, built low on the ground. It had two rooms.

**Cemetery near Wyatt's house.** Hodie said a cemetery was "up on the hill." She said, "There were other family members up there and some of the children that had died."

### **Daily Life in the Community**

**School.** When Hodie lived with her grandparents, she went to Silver Hill School for about six months. It had one room with a divider in the middle. Then her aunt took her to go to Councill Grade School and High School.

**Store.** Hodie said:

We bought from the peddler. A peddler would come by with a truck, and he would have everything on it. They would come on the main road and everyone would run down to see what was on it.

**Food.** When asked what her grandparents grew, Hodie said:

Watermelons, black-eyed peas, corn, potatoes, string beans, cabbage, sweet potatoes, peanuts. We also ate squirrel, rabbits, and fish. Not very often, fish. We would pick berries. Grandmother had big blackberry vines we would pick.

Hodie had mentioned earlier in the interview that the farm was big. She said it had cows, pigs, and horses. They also had a beautiful orchard with "bunches of fruit."

**The Outhouse.** "Our outhouse was back in the field by the orchard. We used to go up there and have books and papers to look through." Hodie said lime was put down in the outhouse and it had no odor. Since she had sisters, they had a "two-holer."

Hodie said sometimes the outhouse was cleaned out, and when that happened:

You would pull your windows down. It was a big wagon [that came]. There was metal, the part where the waste was poured. The wagon had buckets hanging on the side of it.

**Milling.** Hodie's grandparents made molasses. They grew cotton, but they took it to Huntsville to the gin.

**Home Remedies.** Hodie said:

**For a cold.** When we got a cold, Grandmother would get turpentine. She'd burn it. It would crystallize on top. It was thin. We'd suck it for sore throats.

The green of the pine tree. Steep it into a tea for a cold. We also had sassafras [bark] tea.

Asafetida. We'd put it in a little bag with a string and wear it around our neck all winter to help with a cold or other germs we'd get. It looked like gum and came in a little packet. We'd put it in something like a tobacco bag, about 2 inches long.

Some people took a teaspoon of sugar and dropped some drops of turpentine on it for a sore throat or a cold.

**Chiggers.** For chiggers we used a type of oil.

**Toothache.** People smoked tobacco in a pipe for a toothache. I did that once and it made me sick, so I never tried that again.

**Swelling.** Bathe it in vinegar. Pour some vinegar in the pan of water. Put a cloth in the pan and let it [the vinegar-water solution] in then lay the cloth on the swelling.

**Wasp stings.** Wet tobacco and lay it on the sting.

**Doctors.** Hodie said:

Grandmother never went to the doctor. She bought a bottle of some medicine that she said would "keep the worms out of us." Every April, early spring, Grandmother gave us Quinine and then followed with a round of Caster oil to clean our systems out.

When Hodie's family used a doctor, most of the time they went to Huntsville to Dr. Scruggs. Sometimes he would "come out." Dr. Scruggs is pictured on page 162.

## **The Depression**

When asked if her grandparents had gone through a hard time during the Depression years, Hodie replied:

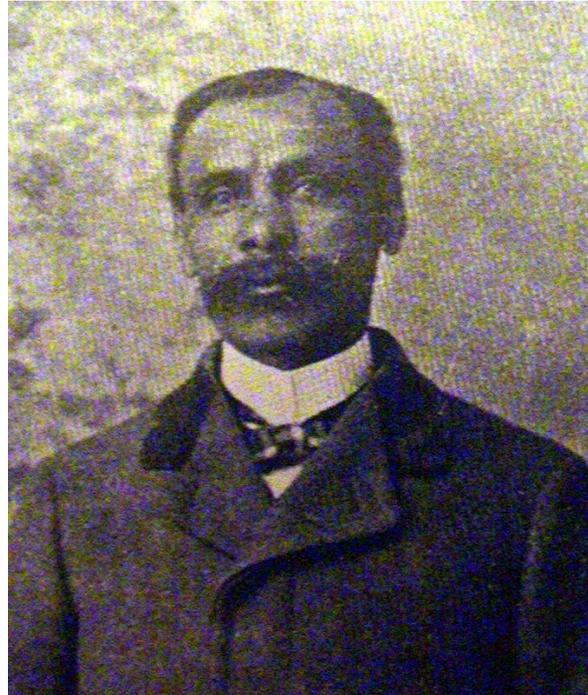
No. They would make molasses and made a lot of their own food. [They] had a smokehouse near the kitchen.



**Jeremiah Lanier, father of Hodie McGraw.**

**BURGESS E. SCRUGGS, M.D.**  
(1860-1934)

Some of the people who were interviewed said their doctor was Dr. Scruggs. A biography of the doctor and the picture shown here is presented in the book *Medicine Bags and Bumpy Roads* (pp. 187-189) written by Jewell S. Goldsmith and Helen D. Fulton in 1985. The following information was drawn from their book.



Burgess E. Scruggs was born in Madison County on October 16, 1860. He was the son of Berry and Peggie Scruggs, who were the slaves of Thomas Sanford and Caroline McCalley. Upon receiving his freedom, and after acquiring all of the schooling that was available in the basement of Lake Side Methodist Episcopal Church, he was graduated from William H. Council High School and decided to become a physician. He was encouraged by the spinster daughters of his former master.

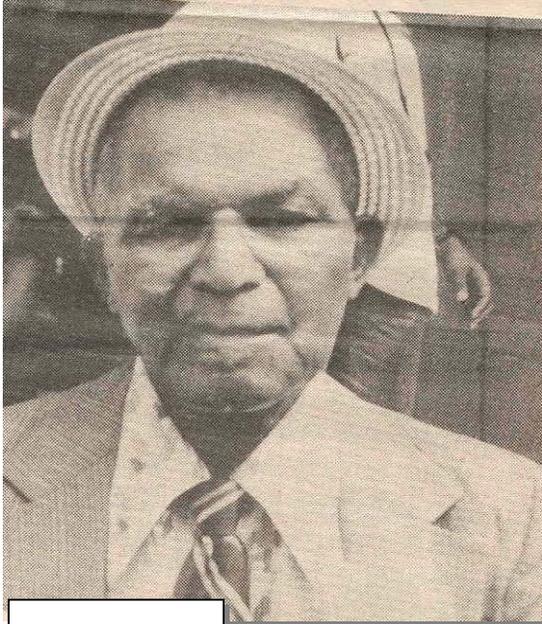
He worked his way through a Black medical college in Tennessee and was one of two Black physicians in Alabama when he opened his practice in Huntsville in 1879. He was a courteous man who was always ready to accommodate, but he was also a determined man, and when he set out to do something, he never wavered. He was president of the Black Fair Association and a trustee of Rust Normal School in 1884, which enabled him to be instrumental in purchasing a lot where a non-sectarian school for Black children could be built. It was supported by the Lakeside Methodist Episcopal Church. Scruggs stressed that education was more valuable than money. He strived to improve the plight of the Black people.

He was elected City Alderman and served four terms (1883-1885 and 1893-1899). He served on the United States Board of Examiners, Board of Pensions from 1891-1897. Dr. Scruggs was held in high esteem by the White members of the medical profession, who were ready to extend to him due professional courtesy.

He was a typical horse-and-buggy doctor who loved the countryside. He owned property in the city and a farm, where he enjoyed supervising the growth of crops; however, being a doctor did not bring him great monetary wealth. For example, he was paid \$37.75 by the City of Huntsville for treating patients with smallpox at the Negro Annex of the Huntsville Hospital for the years 1902 and 1903. Dr. Scruggs is remembered by the Black community of Huntsville as a fine physician and an outstanding citizen.

**EARL P. LACY**  
(Born in 1908)  
Interviewed by Ed Peters

**Source: “Mullins Flat, Pond Beat were Unique Communities,” *The Redstone Rocket*, July 8, 1987.**



**Earl P. Lacy**

### **Where He Lived**

Earl Pensacola (Early P.) Lacy was born in 1908 in a house that stood on the north side of Buxton Road, west of Patton Road in Pond Beat. He was 79 years old when he was interviewed in 1980. Ed Peters described him as a “little gentle man with an encyclopedic memory of the people, places, events, and minutiae that define a place that has no written history.”

### **His Family**

Earl was the son of Henry Lacy and the grandson of James Lacy. He said James was the son of a White man (and a slave) and “the first in his family who ever was allowed to own land”—he was deeded a large acreage by his White father. The Lacy ancestry from a White Englishman for whom Lacy Springs was named was discussed in the interview with Hodie McGraw.

### **Pond Beat and the Ponds**

Lacy explained there was a series of Ponds extending the width of the community “all the way down to Triana.” By 1980, some of the ponds had been drained, but others were still in place, although they were known by different names. Thiokol Pond used to be called Mack Pond. The Test Area 2 Pond, which was on the Lacy property, was known as Rock Pond. Igloo Pond was Round Pond.

### **The Community**

Ed Peters suggested, “The homely names of the Pond Beat and Mullins Flat communities fit the circumstances of these places. There was no electricity, no plumbing, and no telephones.” Early Lacey said that the roads were so rough “it took four mules to pull an empty wagon.” Mullins Flat and Pond Beat were separated by Huntsville Spring Branch,

which flows from east-to-west across the arsenal. Mullins Flat was to the north and Pond Beat extended southward to the Tennessee River.

**Church.** Early's grandfather, James Lacy, was prominent in his community. He donated the land and materials for Cedar Grove Church, which originally stood on Cedar Grove Mountain, the hill just beyond the entrance to Test Area 2 off Patton Road. (It moved to E-235b.)

**Gin and Sorghum Mill.** James Lacy operated a horse-drawn gin and sorghum mill "on the site where the Test Area 2 buildings are now" (as of July 1987). Henry Lacy, Early's father, lost his left hand in an accident at the gin when he was 12 years old. Henry was driving the team of six horses. Early remembers being told that his father "had to stop to clean the saws out because the cotton was wet and the horses started back up while he still had his hand in there."

**The First in Pond Beat to Own a Tractor.** Early thought that Frank Jacobs was the first one in Pond Beat to own a tractor. He said Frank Jacobs was well to do, and of sterling character: "Frank Jacobs did a lot to help poor people. He was a strong fellow... a good fellow who believed in helping everybody—and he got beat aplenty."

**The People and the Community.** Frank Jacobs and Addie Jacobs had sharecroppers. So did the Hortons and the Barleys (D-173). The extensive land ownership of Frank Jacobs and Yancy, Sr. has been discussed in the Horton and Jacobs sections of this manuscript. Early said:

Yancy Horton, money-wise, was the biggest man in Pond Beat, especially among the Colored but among most of the Whites, too. 'T' (Everett T.) Horton was the big man in Mullins Flat.

Early Lacy believed the large number of Black people in the area, particularly Black landowners, was a significant factor in the government's choice of the area for the location of a chemical manufacturing arsenal. The interviews conducted by the researcher in 2005 indicate this is a common belief. Most of the people interviewed were from Mullins Flat and Pond Beat. It was ascertained that the population of these areas was probably almost 95% Black, and Black land ownership was also predominant. It was speculated (based on limited interviewing of Elko and Hickory Grove community residents) that the proportion of White ownership was higher in the northern part of the arsenal; however, most of the White owners did not live on their land.

Since Early generally was discussing the communities and people located in the southern half of the arsenal, a question arises as to whether he was referring to the entire area encompassed by RSA, or the communities south of Martin Road when he said 90 percent of the population and 75 percent of the land owners were Black. He stated: "You could might-near count the White landowners like this [finishing his sentence by displaying a hand]" then adding "and some of the Whites had come into possession by Black dispossession" [when mortgages were foreclosed] (p. 11).

Ed Peters noted:

When the Army bought the land in 1941, much of it was in the hands of people who had been born to slave women or were only a generation or two removed from those who had been. They farmed their own land, owned their own stores, shops, mills, and gins and put up their own money so they could have schools for their children.

The holdings of some of the Mullins Flat and Pond Beat families, notably the Jacobs and Hortons, were extensive amounting to hundreds, even thousands, of acres.

**The First Automobile in Pond Beat.** Early said that Tom Hancock brought the first automobile to Pond Beat. He said it was a fine car—probably a Cadillac or Hupmobile. However, cars weren't allowed on public roads, so when Hancock went to town, he had to go in his wagon. According to Skip Vaughn, Early chuckled when he explained how the hapless owner drove the car around the fields for a while and then parked it in the barn 'where it rotted down and remained until the Army came and got rid of it.'

**Haunts.** In the 1987 interview, Early said he "visits an old cemetery near the entrance to Test Area 5 and remembers the apparition that he saw rise from a woman's grave and hover over the roof of a nearby house where her husband and his new wife were spending their first night together."

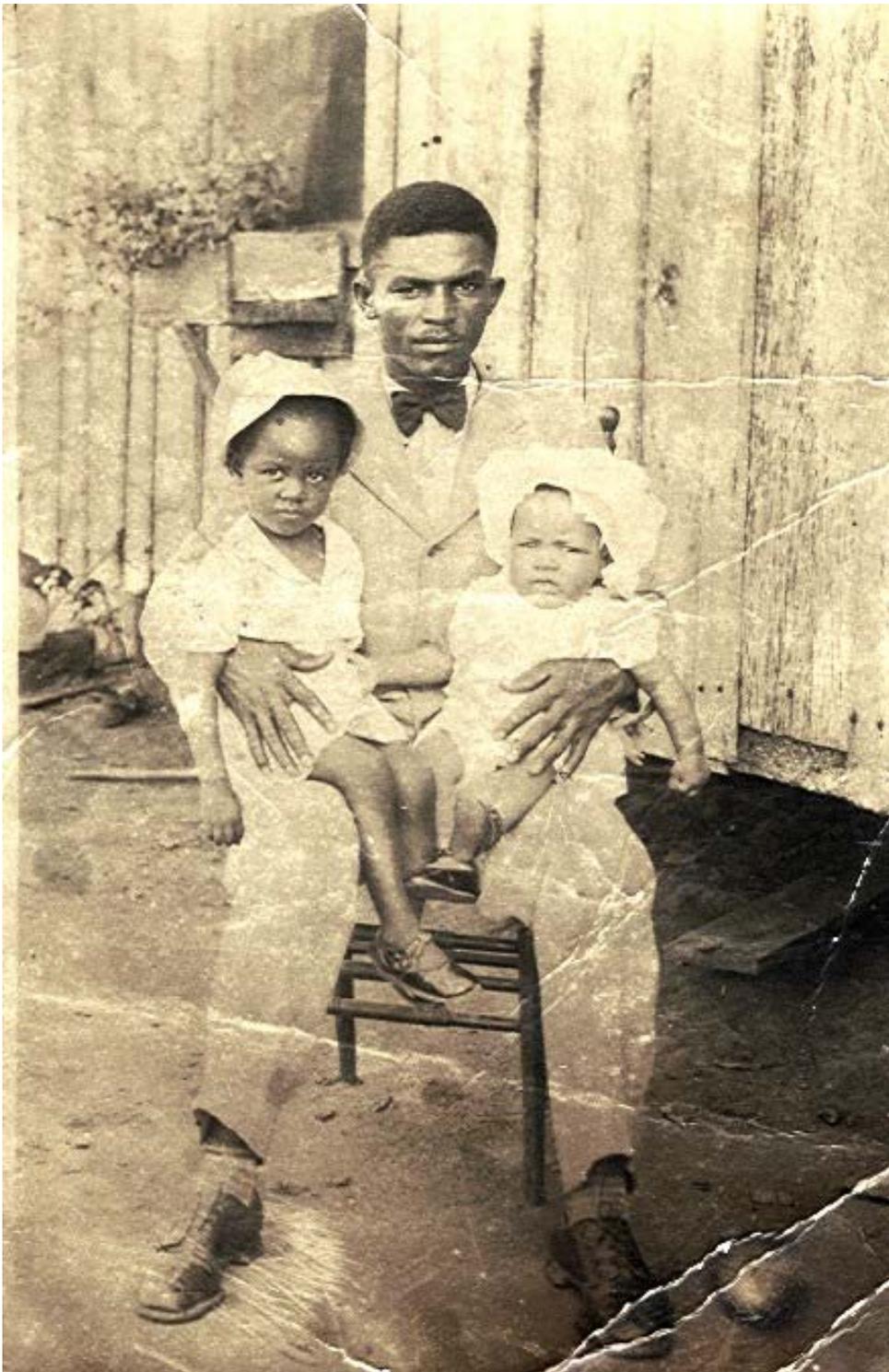
**Finding a Spouse.** Early said that it was difficult for people in the communities to find someone to marry who was not "too close" kin. He said he forestalled getting married until a new family moved into the community from Mississippi who had a daughter "he fell in love with." Others who were interviewed confirmed Early's statement that it was hard to find a candidate for spouse that wasn't somehow related. In at least one instance, it was determined that first cousins had married, however, one person interviewed commented that the cousins had done so "to keep property in the family."

**After Leaving Pond Beat.** Early Lacy was a farmer until 1955 and a retired Methodist minister. He said he worked on the arsenal at the DDT plant and was there for ten years until he was fired for being an unsafe worker after he fell and crippled his right foot.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.** Taken from an e-mail letter written to the researcher by Dennis Simpson. His uncle, Henry Clay Simpson, died in 1918. Early Lacy remembered Henry Simpson and told Dennis about him:

Early [Lacy] told me as a little boy, Uncle Henry would pick him up in his horse and buggy and would take him to his home and showed him his chickens, turkeys and pet snake. He said Henry would let him feed his snake chicken eggs. He [Earl Lacy] also said Henry was the only person in Pond Beat that had a telephone, and [he] allowed all his neighbors to use it if they had an

emergency. Early mentioned, “Henry was always helping his neighbors, didn’t care if they were white or black, if you needed help, he was there.”



**Earl P. Lacy, the oldest son of Henry Lacy, and two children. Photograph courtesy of Pearl Horton Higginbotham.**

## **FELIX LANIER AND GEORGIA LACY LANIER**

**Interviewed Dec. 19, 2000**

**Further visits in May, June August, and September 2005**



**Felix and Georgia Lacy Lanier in 2005**

Felix Lanier and Georgia Lacy were married in 1941; they have now been married for 65 years. The researcher conducted an initial interview with them five years ago (2000). In 2005, she made a number of visits to their home. The interaction was warm and comfortable. Georgia provided a copy of the Lacy-Fisher family tree (see page 176).

### **FELIX LANIER (Born February 16, 1915)**

**The Family of Felix Lanier.** Felix Lanier grew up in Mullins Flat. He is the son of Willie Lanier (born 1883, died at age 69) and Mary McCrary (born about 1880). His paternal grandmother was Mandy Lanier. She was the second wife of James P. Burns, with whom she had a daughter, Ophelia (see Charles Burns interview.) His maternal

grandmother was Eddie Irwin (sp?) who was born in 1862 and died in 1964 at age 102. His maternal grandfather was Charlie McCrary.

**Where Felix Lanier Lived.** Felix's family lived in Mullins Flat. His father rented from Milton Lanier (C-146). Milton Lanier owned land in various places, as Felix said, "150 acres here, 250 acres there," but the location of where Felix parents lived was ascertained by locating the Lanier property that had the neighbors Felix mentioned. The neighbors were Burrell Jacobs (C-145), and Walter Jacobs and his wife, Kitty (C-147A).

Felix said Walter was to the northeast and the others were to the west, about a half mile: "The main road wasn't in front of our house, but a little side road came off the main road to our houses. The main road went north-south." [Do you know how far it was north to the Elko switch of the railroad?] Walter said, "About four miles." He didn't know a name for the north-south road, but he said it went down to the river. He said Elko Road was dirt.

He remembered when his Grandmother Eddie lived about a mile northwest of his parents. He said she wore a long dress. Felix said, "Her dress came down to where your pants is. She'd say: Wipe your feet, boy, wipe your feet! She was as clean as a pin."

Felix said his grandmother's house had two bedrooms in the front, separated by a hallway. Each bedroom had a fireplace on the outside wall, and each was entered through the door from the hall. The bedroom doors were on either side of the hall just after one entered through the front door. A room ran across the back of the house. It was entered through a door at the end of the hall. This room, used as a kitchen, was probably added to the original structure. Felix said:

To enter you got up onto the front porch. When you went in the front door, the hallway went to the kitchen. The kitchen was all the way across the back. In Grandmother Eddie's kitchen, the kitchen table was across from the stove, over by the window, on the left side. The stove was on the right hand side. The kitchen had a window on each side.

Grandmother Eddie had a hen house and chickens in back of the house. The outhouse was in the back on the left side, across from the chicken house. [Her husband had passed on by then. Felix didn't remember what year he'd died.] His barn was a pretty good piece from the house. From the way the house was sitting, it was east of the house.

Felix said his grandmother remembered the Civil War. Georgia Lanier added that Felix's Grandma Eddie told her about when the soldiers came and put tents up on Cavalry Hill.

**Other People and Their Homes.** The researcher used the Army Real Estate Map and read names on parcels near where Felix lived, describing where the parcels were in relation to others. Felix and Georgia knew these people. Felix appeared to be able to picture the neighborhood in his mind. The researcher asked him to describe the houses

the people lived in as best he could. Georgia remembered this community, also, and sometimes added a comment. The descriptions below are not direct quotes, as there were pauses when the researcher added a short probing question, and the probes have not been included unless deemed necessary for clarity. However, the comments have been written as Felix replied, sometimes in incomplete sentences, as one speaks. Rephrasing them would detract from the tone of the speaker:

**Parcel C-107, owned by Henry High.** He was a White man. He had a one-story bungalow house. The house was near Madkin Mountain, about 300 yards north of the road. He had a big barn right in back of the house (west). There were two other houses, worker houses. They got a 30 or 40 percent share if they were sharecroppers. These were tenant houses, room and a kitchen type. [Enough] Room for a man and his wife.

[What if they had kids?] Kids, too. If the landowner liked you enough, you could add another room.

[If there were only two rooms, where did everybody sleep?] Folding cots. They had wire bottoms. You could fold them up and slide them under the bed. I've wired up many that would break loose.

Sometimes there were chen chez. [The researcher asked both Felix and Georgia to repeat this word, and has spelled it as it sounded. They laughed when she inquired what that was. Their answer? Bed bugs, which they described as being "cousin to a tick."]

**[Parcel C-121 and C-122.** Parcel C-121 was owned by Mamie Lee Hancock, who was a sister to Edith Timmons (Parcel C-122).] The two sisters had the same kind of houses. They were white frame and had four rooms—two bedrooms. They both had a barn."

**[Parcel C-122, owned by Edith Timmons.]** Edith was a sister to Mamie Lee Hancock.

**[Parcel C-123.** Pine Grove Missionary Baptist Church--Primitive Missionary Baptist Church.] It was down from where RSA Building 4663 is. Go west from the building about a half-mile, on the side of Rideout Road.

**[Parcel 133, owned by Darphus Love.]** Darphus didn't live on the property. I don't recall a house on it. It was farmed. There was a barn on it. Celia Love was E. Horton's sister. She and Darphus [her husband] owned a store right at their house.

It wasn't far from Frances Horton's place. The store was separate from the house. The store had food, seedcorn, cottonseed. We called it "Old

Man Darph's [Adolphus Love] Store." [Further detail is in the James Love interview.]

**Making a Living.** Felix said you could rent or share crop (50-50 or 40-60). Some people could be monthly hands. They moved into a house, seeing after the stock and hauling wood to the house (of the man who hired him). There were other ways to make a living. L.G. Hayes bootlegged liquor, and he had a whole pasture full of hogs. Everyone had some hogs.

**Store.** Felix mentioned earlier that Darphus Love had a store in the neighborhood. The rolling store came around, and many people bought or traded from it. Jesse Brown had a store on Clinton Street.

**The Mill.** Felix said "we all" went to the Douglas Hill Mill on Clinton Street. Jesse Brown's store was closest to the gristmill. The mill was on the south side of the store.

**School.** Felix was in the Silverhill School area. He went to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He said for "above the 9<sup>th</sup> grade through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade there was Council High School near Huntsville Hospital. "We called it over in the Grove." Council Training School was further north. "Most above the 9<sup>th</sup> grade went to the fields to chop cotton. You had to pay a fee to go to school and most people wasn't able."

**Hunting.** During the winter, the men hunted possums, coons, or rabbits. The men in the family didn't fish much. Felix said the owner of the hardware store in Huntsville liked to hunt. He would come to Felix parents' house and stay two or three days in their spare room. Felix's father went hunting with him. Felix said he "gave us kids each 75 cents or 80 cents each—and that was a lot of money back then."

### **GEORGIA LACY LANIER (Born in April 15, 1918)**

**Where Georgia Lived.** Georgia said her father and mother (Jackson Lacy and Mattie Lee Lacy) rented from Hubbard Cartwright. From her description of the location of neighbors and other landmarks, the parcel on the Army Real Estate Map that corresponds is listed as being owned by Kirby Cartwright (E-213).

Georgia said the nearest neighbor was J.D. Green. He was over the farm for Jack Anderson (a White man). It was a big farm. The owner didn't live there. Other people lived on the place and worked under Green. The house J.D. Green lived in was big; it had two stories and five or six rooms. It was twice as big as the others. The only parcel showing for John Anderson in that vicinity is G-297, which is to the southeast, and seems too far away to fit for nearest neighbor. However, it is possible that Anderson owned more land in the area at one time, and it was sold prior to 1941.

In recalling neighboring property, Georgia said, "Ed Brooks' property. There was a road between it and Cartwright's place where we lived." The Army Real Estate Map shows

T.C. and R. E. Brooks as owners of the property (E-234) on the south side of the road below the eastern half of Cartwright's property. The road appears to be where Redstone Road is now. Brooks had more than a dozen sharecroppers.

**Life as a Renter or Sharecropper.** Georgia proceeded to discuss Ed Brooks. She explained:

In July you'd be through chopping weeds. You'd lay the crop back. [What does lay the crop back mean?] You didn't want to knock the bolls off. You were through then until you open up for picking. You'd pick in August. Now you can't get the cotton in early enough. In July, Ed Brooks ran the people off. One man, John King, said, "I made the cotton, and I'm going to stay here and get it. We'll settle up by my books. He kept his books, just like Ed Brooks kept his. John King stayed. They settled it by his books. He [Brooks] was scared of him.

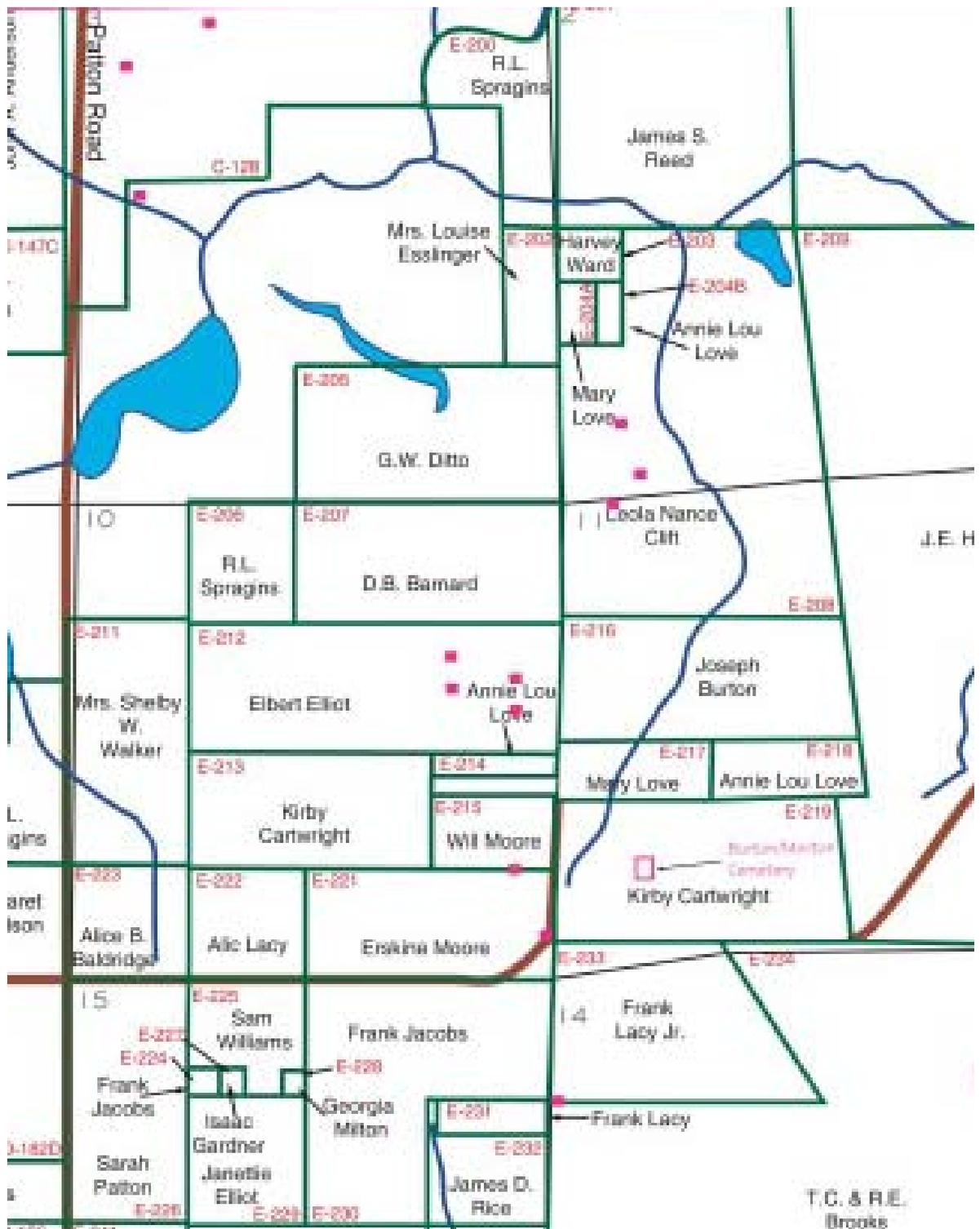
Georgia said this sometimes happened to sharecroppers: "They planted, chopped, and laid it by, then the landowner made them move." They had no recourse but to move. The landowner furnished so much money to make the crop (seed, food, etc.), which would be about \$20 to \$50 a month. When the crop was in, they settled up. Sometimes when the field was laid back, the land owner would tell the sharecropper that he'd already received, in credit, all he'd had coming to him, and the sharecropper had to move. Then he would have no place to live and would have to work for a wage at whatever he could find.

Georgia added that Mr. Cartwright, the man who furnished her daddy, "was a good man. He ran a grocery store in town on the south side of the courthouse, joined to TT Terry's store." She said:

He was a wonderful man to deal with. He was fair. If you needed something, you'd go get it and pay when the crop came. There was only one house on the land where we worked. We moved away and stayed five years. Mr. Cartwright said, "Come back home." [Taking note that Georgia said there was only one house on the land where they worked, it is noted that one archaeological site is recorded on that parcel, 1Ma704.]

**Church.** Georgia went to the Missionary Baptist Church (Gaines Chapel), founded in 1911. She said she moved to this church when she was very small, in about 1921. She mentioned that Cedar Grove Church was located up on a hill, not too far from Redstone Arsenal Gate 1 on Buxton Road.

A section of the Army Real Estate Map showing the properties in the area where Georgia Lacy Lanier lived is presented on the following page. Frank Lacy, who owned Parcels F-231 and F-233 was her uncle.



The Kirby Cartwright property where Georgia lived. Shirley Chunn also lived in this area. Source: Map created for the Army by Alexander Archaeological Consultants.

**School.** Georgia went to the Gaines Chapel Church School. She said:

The schoolhouse was close to where the church was built, right across from it. They weren't that far apart. They tore down the schoolhouse and built the church on the same lot. Then school was held in the church.

[What road was it on?] I don't remember what the name of the road was, but Burton Cemetery was on the road. Going in to the arsenal, you'd turn right off Whitesburg Pike [South Memorial Parkway].

I had to walk to school. Sometimes my dad would let me ride a mule because it was so far away. We lived a long way from the school. We'd leave the mules in Uncle Frank's [Frank Lacy's] barn. He lived near the school. Some mules would throw you. We had two. Buster and Charlie would be on a mule, and Lucy Ann and me [would be] on a mule.

People would wrap their feet up tote sacks to keep warm [i.e., croaker sacks, burlap bags].



**Georgia and Felix Lanier when they were younger.**

**Folk Beliefs.** Georgia remembered that some people said: "Don't sweep dirt out of the door after sundown. That's bad luck. Don't cut toenails or fingernails on Friday or you'll see your blood before Monday."

The researcher told Georgia that Hodie McGraw (a relative of Felix) told the researcher that people smoked tobacco in a pipe for a toothache. Hodie said she had tried it once, but never again. Georgia said she knew of this remedy, but that was not how it was done as far as she knew. You had to take the stem out of the pipe and get the amber out of the stem. (Georgia said that amber was the brown substance that collected in the stem as a result of saliva and strong tobacco.) You put the amber down in the tooth that ached. (Either there were two beliefs involving a pipe or Hodie hadn't got the details right when she heard people talking about the remedy.)

**Christmas.** At Christmas time, the women in Georgia's family would start cooking a week ahead of time. They baked sweet potato pies, and cakes. They might have a turkey, guineas, a goose, or duck. They'd cook more than one kind of meat, and "you would pick the one you wanted." Georgia said that people would go from house to house to enjoy eating with their friends and neighbors.

When asked about Christmas gifts, Georgia said, "It wasn't like it is now. You got simple things from the 10 cent store—gloves, a sweater, or shoes. You were glad to get anything then. The church would have programs at night."

## **GEORGIA AND FELIX LANIER: MOST FAMILIES DID THE SAME**

**Growing Food.** Felix and Georgia both said their families grew "cotton, corn, peanuts, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, watermelons, string beans, crowder peas, black-eyed peas that we dried out, English peas, every kind of peas, sugarcane, and tomatoes." Felix said his grandmother was a great cook and would can everything. She used to talk about how her daughter Mamie "put stuff on exhibit" at the State Fair in the 20's and 30's. In a later interview with Georgia's first cousin, Elnora Lanier, she said her family grew the same vegetables named above, and added cantaloupe to the list.

Both Georgia's family and Felix's family had hogs. Georgia said everybody had hogs. They'd kill the hogs and salt the meat to hang it to cure, and they made lard from the fat. Everybody had chickens. Georgia's family had ducks and guineas.

**Cotton.** Felix said farmers got 5 cents a pound for cotton, which came to \$5 for a hundred pounds or \$25 for a bale. A bale was about 500 pounds. That was in 1931-1932. Then, Felix said:

One year, maybe '32 or '33, there was an allowance on what you could plant. Herbert Hoover, the government, would maybe allow you to plant so many acres of it in cotton. More than that had to be cut down. I had 50 acres of land, and the government let me plant four acres of it with cotton.

Georgia said that everybody “that was big enough” picked cotton. They sat at home at night and picked the bolls off. She said that they picked cotton during some *cold* days. With tone and body language, Georgia emphasized the word “cold.” Georgia explained:

You picked when you were **so** cold. You picked when the ground was spewed up [iced]. I hate to think of that.

We’d pile it [the cotton] on the porch. Then we’d sit by the fire and pick it. [What did you put it in?] Cotton baskets were about three feet tall. We had scales and weighed it at home. We had to have 1300 pounds to make a bale. You’d put it in the wagon after you weighed a basket full, or, if it was raining, you’d put it in the barn or a dry place.

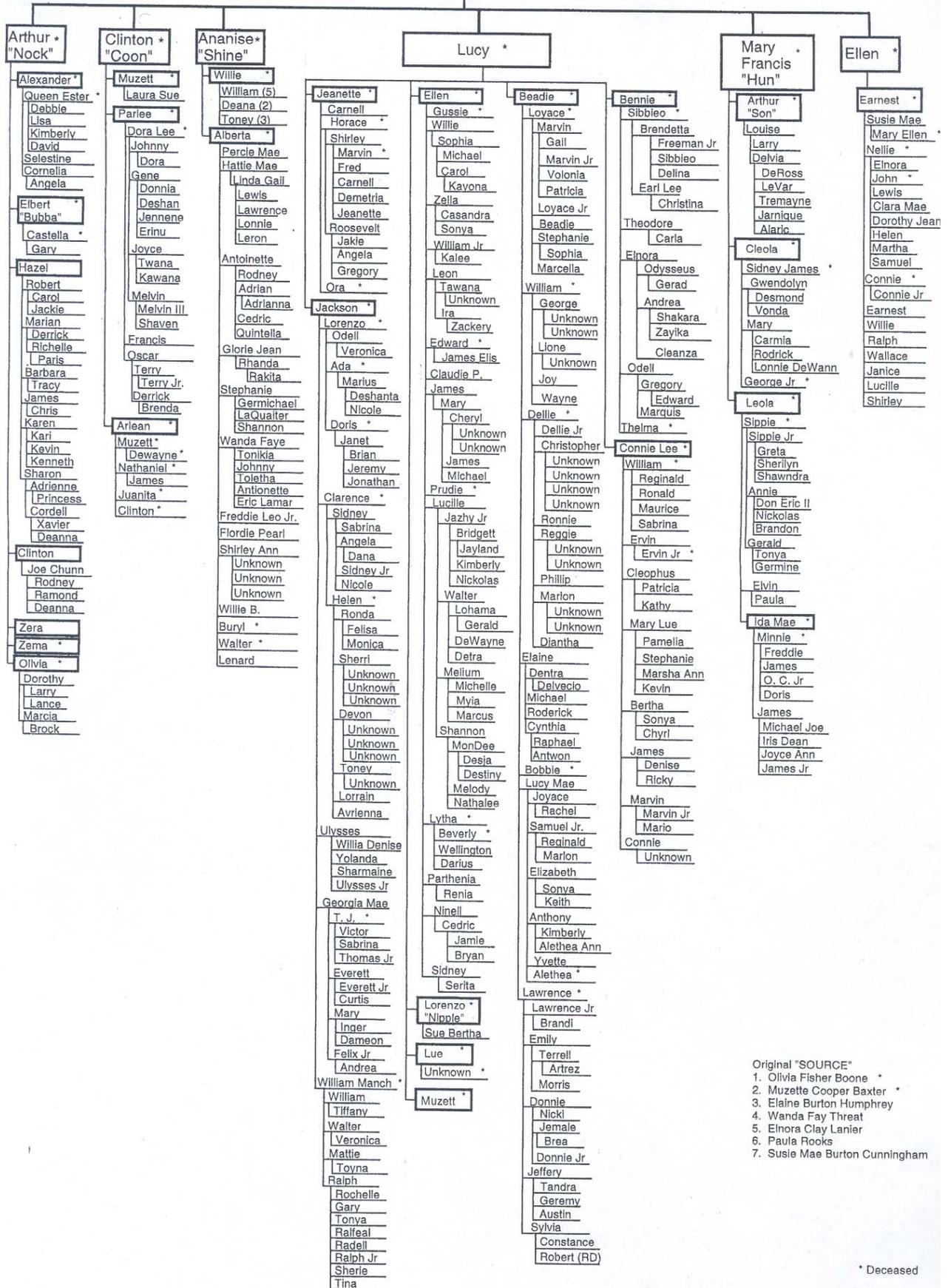
**The Cotton Gins.** Both Felix’s family and Georgia’s family sold cotton. Felix said his father took his to a gin in Huntsville: “Brown’s Road [Brown’s Ferry Road—this part is now Bob Wallace] and Lankford Avenue, it used to be, now Jordan. Right on the corner.” Georgia’s family, who lived in Pond Beat, took their cotton to Whitesburg gin sometimes.

### **A Record of Georgia Lacy Lanier’s Family**

A chart showing Georgia’s genealogy is presented on the following page. The “original sources” for the material in the chart are printed in the right hand corner at the bottom. It was compiled by the family members for a family reunion booklet. Georgia Mae Lacy is shown as the daughter of Jackson Lacy, who was the son of Lucy Fisher Lacy who was the daughter of Jackson and Hannah Fisher. Unfortunately, neither the married names of the female descendants or the names of their husbands) have been included; they would have shown the connection between the family names that are reported in this study.

(Note: After this manuscript had been completed, the researcher talked with Mrs. Georgia Lacy Lanier, with whom she has developed a friendship. The researcher mentioned to Mrs. Lanier that only the first names were included on the chart, and the younger generations of descendants of Jackson and Hannah Fisher might not know the last names of the people, which might prevent them from identifying them. The researcher noted that the same first names appeared in different generations. Mrs. Lanier felt this was a good point; she said that she is on the committee for the next family reunion and would bring this up before the committee. )

JACKSON FISHER AND HANNAH FISHER



- Original "SOURCE"
1. Olivia Fisher Boone \*
  2. Muzette Cooper Baxter \*
  3. Elaine Burton Humphrey \*
  4. Wanda Fay Threat \*
  5. Elnora Clay Lanier \*
  6. Paula Rooks \*
  7. Susie Mae Burton Cunningham \*

\* Deceased

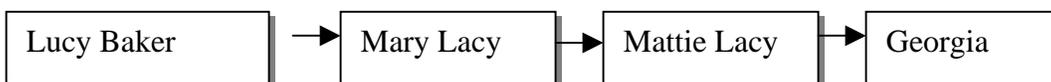
**GEORGIA MAE LACY LANIER'S HISTORIC PHOTOS**



Lorenzo Lacy. Georgia's brother. Born 1913.



**Georgia's great grandmother, Lucy Baker. She was born in slavery and died in 1920.**





**Mary Lacy--Georgia's grandmother.**



**Mattie Lacy--Georgia's mother as a very young woman.**



**Mattie Lacy—Georgia's mother as a mature woman.**



Mary Lacy's sister, Josie Canchelo (spelling?).



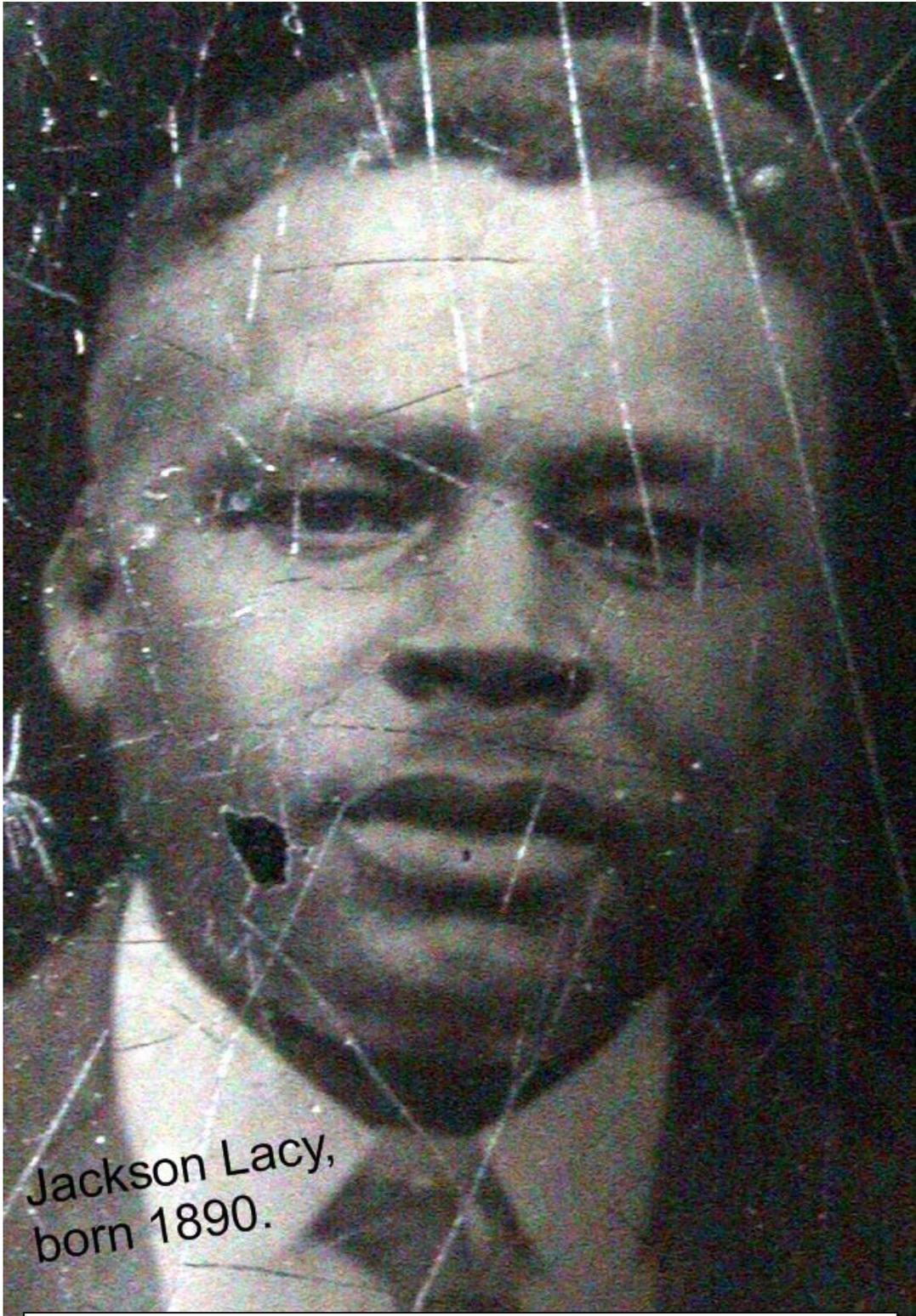
**Mary Lacy's sister, Mattie Dixon. Photo by W. M. Young, P.O. Box 154, Gadsden, Alabama, 1930's.**



Mary Lacy's sister, Ada Lacy Moore with Lawrence Moore. Date: 1930's.



**Lucy Fisher Lacy was one of the six children of Jackson Fisher and Hannah Fisher. She was at least 70 years of age when the photo was taken. She died in the 1930's and was interred in Burton Cemetery. Depending on her birth date, she was either born a slave or "just down from slavery," which is an expression taken from local Black people who were interviewed. Her son, Jackson, was Georgia Mae's father.**



Jackson Lacy,  
born 1890.

**Jackson Lacy, the son of Lucy Fisher Lacy and the father of Georgia. Georgia said he was probably in his 40's when this photo was taken. Born in 1890, he was a minister at Gaines Chapel Missionary Baptist Church.**



Above: Georgia's sister, Clarence Odell Lacy Petty and a friend. Below left: Doris Lee Wade, "acting up" in a soldier's cap. She was the daughter of Parlee Fisher and Perry Wade. Below right: Georgia May Rice. Her mother was a Tutt.





Georgia's brother Lawrence Lacy and Mila Joiner. Mila was the daughter of Lee Joiner, who was the son of John Joiner. It was said that John didn't want anyone to go near Horton's Ford because "he had corn in it."



**World War I soldiers, Searcy Timmons from Pond Beat and friend (name not known by Georgia Lanier, who has the photo.)**



**Celesta Moore and her mother, Bertha (Bert) Moore, Georgia's closest neighbor in Pond Beat (about 1/2 mile). Celesta died in 1940. Georgia said she might be buried in Burton Cemetery. Erskine Moore is shown as the property owner of Parcel E-221, which adjoins the property of Kirby Cartwright (C-219) where Georgia's parents lived.**



**Clifford Chunn. His mother was Hickman Chunn and his father was Baker Chunn.**

**SHIRLEY CHUNN**  
Interviewed summer of 2005

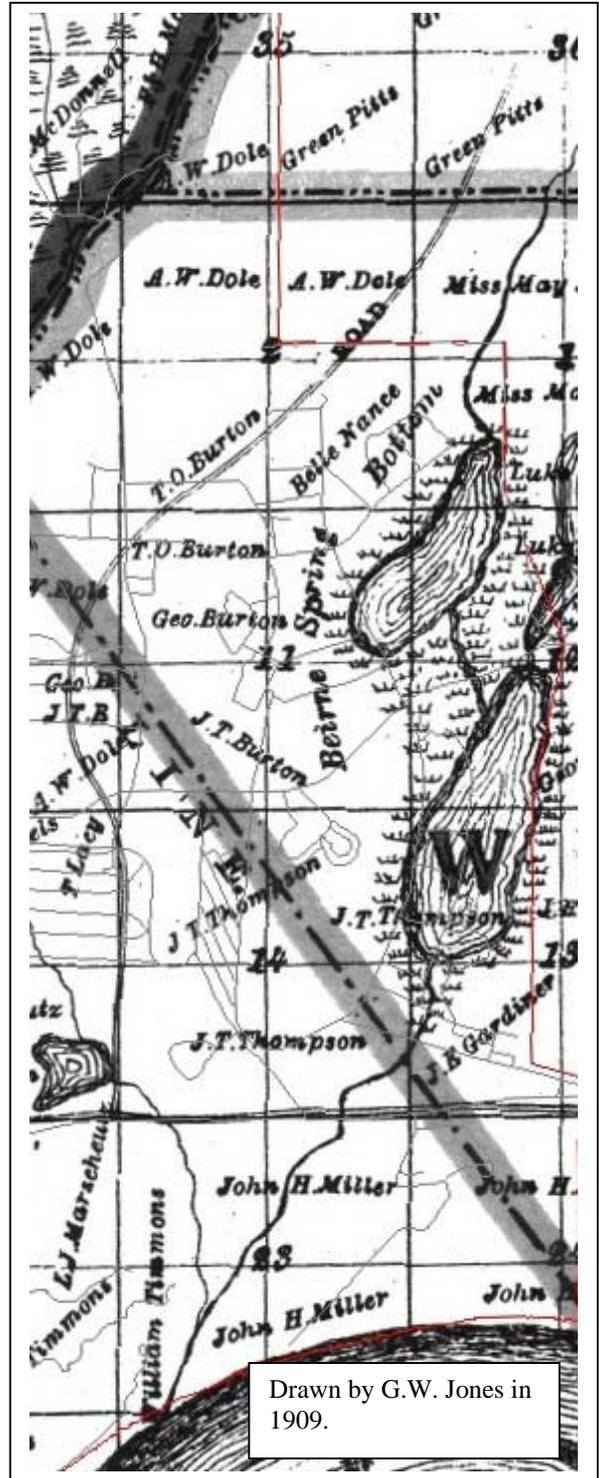
The researcher talked with Shirley Chunn by telephone in the early summer of 2005. Mrs. Chunn talked for a while, and then said she “had to go now.” However, even that short conversation introduces another member of the a former arsenal community, identifies another member of Gaines Chapel Church (where school was also held), provides the location of another store that was located in someone’s home (Parcel E-212), and reveals that the man who ran the store was a World War I veteran.

Shirley Chunn said her mother’s father was Adolphus Love, and her mother’s father’s father was Rufus Love. Moses Love and Adolphus Love were half-brothers (see James Love interview), which causes the researcher to question whether Rufus Love was the biological grandfather of Shirley Chunn. She said her grandfather had owned land “out there” [on what is now the arsenal]. This was an understatement, as Adolphus owned a significant amount of land (see James Love interview), and was a pillar of the Mullins Flat community. Shirley Chunn also is tied into the Joiner family. She said Walter Joiner is her cousin. Mrs. Chunn said:

When my grandmother [Mary] married Ernest [Burton], they lived on the land of Mr. Cliff. I lived with them. It was on Burton Road. Daddy lived on Pond Beat Road. Burton [Road] is where Thiokol used to be. [Burton Road is shown on map insert.]

Elbert Elliott was my step-daddy. His mother was Jeanette Elliott. We used to walk from Burton Road to her house.

A map drawn in 1909 shows Burton Road, which begins in Section 36 and goes south to the Farley-Triana Road.



Jeanette and Elbert ran a store that was a room in their house. They sold candy and soap. I can't remember the house too well. They had two bedrooms. In those days you didn't have a living room.

I went to school in a church. It was called Gaines Chapel, there on Burton Road.

Shirley Chunn stated that she used to walk from Burton Road to her house. The researcher has concluded that Burton Road went north from what is now Redstone Road, possibly along the property line of the Burton property shown on the Army Real Estate Map as Parcel E-216 at the time of sale in 1941.

The Burton/Morton Cemetery is on Parcel E-218 to the south of Joseph Burton's land, on a parcel that belonged to Kirby Cartwright in 1941. This is on the north shoulder of what is now Redstone Road. The cemetery was photographed by J. P. Rankin.



In 1940, the War Department signed a contract with Baltimore architects/engineers Whitman, Requardt & Smith for their services for Huntsville Arsenal, Gulf Chemical Warfare Depot, and Redstone Ordnance Plant. Army files dated 1952 contain information from the Whitman, Requardt and Smith survey of Burton Cemetery. The centered heading on the page is "Report on Graves—Colored Cemeteries." The following names are listed:

Bernice Copeland, 1941  
Bessie Burton, 1927  
Geo. Burton  
Susie A. Burton, 1929  
Ella B. Chunn, 1940  
Annie Willingham  
Mary Cuff, 1858-1931  
    Cement headstone  
L.V. Tate, 1938  
Wm. Barnhard, 1855-1931  
    Cement headstone  
Tansy Barnhard, 1939  
Twenty-one other graves, unmarked

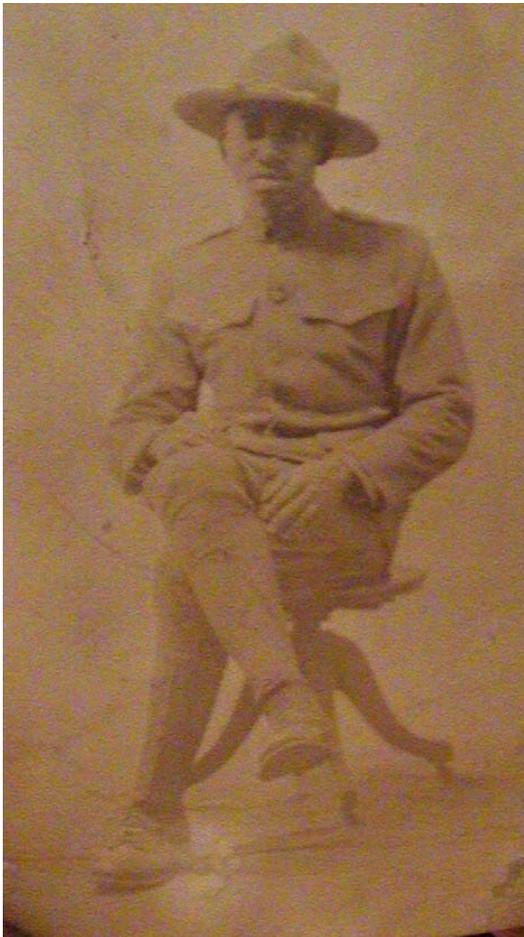
Note: Georgia Lacy Lanier said her mother, Lucy Fisher Lacy, was buried in Burton Cemetery in the 1930's.

The birth dates on the two cement stones would indicate that Mary Cuff and Wm. Bernard were probably born in slavery. Since no "cement stones" were present for the other names listed, it is probable that their graves were marked by the tin markers that

were furnished by the funeral homes in that time. It is reasonable to suggest that some of them, as well as those whose graves had no markers, were also born in slavery.

The cement cemetery markers that were present in the cemetery when the War Department took the land in 1952 are no longer in the cemetery. This is evidence that the assertion the Army removed stones from some of the cemeteries (and some say threw them in the river) is true.

In this area where Shirley Chunn lived, the name Love appears on the Army Real Estate Map. Two very small parcels are between the Joseph Burton parcel and Cartwright's. They are Parcel E-217 owned by Mary Love and Parcel E-218 owned by Annie Lou Love. Annie Love also owned a small and narrow parcel (E-214) bordering Mary's to the west. In addition, each of the women owned a small parcel further to the north (Parcel 204-A for Mary and 204-B for Annie); these parcels joined. Since these parcels are in the area Shirley Chunn described, it is possible that the Mary Love who owned them was her grandmother. However, family names were often repeated through the generations, so it could have been another Love relative.



Shirley Chunn said that when her Grandmother Mary married Ernest Burton, they lived on property that belonged to "Mr. Cliff." The Cliff parcel (Parcel E-208, owner Leola Nance Cliff in 1941) was a large parcel of land located between the Love and Burton property.

Shirley Chunn said Elbert Elliott was her step-daddy and the son of Jeanette Elliot, whose house they used to walk to from Burton Road. The Army Real Estate Map shows Elbert Elliott owned Parcel E-212.

In an interview with Georgia Lanier (Felix and Georgia Lanier interview), Georgia showed the researcher a photograph of Elbert Elliot taken when he returned from fighting in World War I. She said her father, Jackson Lacy, and Jeanette were sister and brother. Elbert had a son named Rufus.

**Elbert Elliot in 1918. Source: Georgia Lacy Lanier.**

## AARON BURNS

(Born 1892)

### An Interview by Skip Vaughn

The memories of Aaron Burns, who lived in the Mullins Flat community, are preserved in an interview that was printed in the *Redstone Rocket* in 1980. The interview provides a glimpse of the land that is now Redstone Arsenal through the eyes and from the mind of a man who was born in 1892, almost 115 years ago. The pertinent paragraphs are presented verbatim below.

**“Farming was their livelihood,” *The Redstone Rocket*, July 2, 1980.**

Aaron Burns remembers walking to church in the Mullins Flat community of what is now part of Redstone Arsenal.

Those who lived farther away from the Center Grove Methodist Episcopal Church would ride to church on horse-driven, two-seat “surreys” or one seat buggies, said Burns, who is 88 years old.

His father, who died in 1918, was one of seven trustees who organized the church in the area where Building 5250 houses the Missile Command headquarters today.

“Now when the war department bought that 40,000 acres, Cedar Grove Church came over here, united and built a church together,” Burns said.

Cedar Grove Church was located to the south across a branch of Indian Creek in what was then called the Pond Beat Community. Cedar Grove and Center Grove churches united to form a church in Huntsville when the Army bought the land for a military installation.

Burns left his community in 1939, two years before the Army came, because of a fire which destroyed his farming livelihood. “If you didn’t farm, you didn’t have a job otherwise,” he said.

He moved to Harvest where he lives today and rents out his land for farming. He was manager at Longview Gin Company in Huntsville before the cotton gin firm folded in 1960.

Burns recalls “three or four” white families and “50 or more, I guess, black families lived in the community where he was born. Most people were tenant farmers who provided labor for a farm owner in exchange for a place to live,” Burns said.

“I’d say they were happy under the conditions because they had no other source of living,” he said. “The arsenal came and employed a lot of those people eligible to get jobs, and most of them, all of them, began to buy little homes, you know.”

The farm land was “alright” but farmers then didn’t have the skill to rebuild their

land and use fertilizer like they should, he said.

Burns was “fortunate” because his father paid rent on farming land and didn’t have to sharecrop.

“At that time, there were very few tractors. Some few farmers owned tractors but we used horse, mule, plow,” he said.

Burns, a widower, has two sons and a daughter. One son, Burgess, worked on the Arsenal from 1950 to 1964.

“I hired in for 87 cents an hour as an ammunition handler,” said Burgess Burns, 54. During his tour of duty, he became a security guard and was a building inspector before leaving for an arsenal in Indiana.

## CHARLES BURNS

Charles Burns once wrote that he was four years old when World War I started. The researcher did not interview him. However, he will tell the reader about himself through a “jewel” that was found.

### Finding a Jewel

When a researcher constantly digs, sometimes a jewel is found. The jewel found during the course of this research was an account Charles Burns had handwritten on notebook paper. Actually, two jewels were found—one led to the other. The first was Raneë’ Pruitt in the Heritage Room at the Huntsville Public Library. Raneë’ seems to remember every book and paper in the Heritage Room and how to find it; in addition, the researcher observed that she assists, with patience and interest, each person who approaches her desk for help in searching books, records, or web sites.

Charles Burns was interested in his ancestors. As discussed in the section of this manuscript on the Horton family, Charles sought to document his family line that came down from Jack Horton and Amanda Jacobs (his great grandparents). Charles became acquainted with Raneë’ because she assisted him in his research.

In the letter written from Chicago where he resided with his family in 1993, Charles Burns thanked Raneë’ Pruitt for the assistance she had given him in the past and asked if she would assist him in finding information about William Horton (the father of Andrew Jackson [Jack] Horton). He also inquired about a copy of the will of William Horton. He was piecing together the dates and records to establish the facts about Amanda Jacobs, who was said to have been purchased for \$900 by a Horton. (Felix Lanier commented to the researcher that Charles’ maternal grandfather Everett Horton looked “just like a white man.”) Raneë’ had in a file photocopied pages of the will she had sent to Charles.

In an article written by Ed Peters, reporting an interview with Charles Burns, published in the July 8, 1987 issue of the *Redstone Rocket*, Burns said he was writing a book “on the life of Huntsville and my folks.” At some point in time, Charles Burns told Raneë’ Pruitt he wanted to write a book about his family history. He gave Raneë’ a photocopy of 32 handwritten pages. Raneë’ kept them in the file with her correspondence with him.

In the spring of 2005, Raneë’ Pruitt showed the pages written by Burns to the researcher and allowed her to photocopy them. As far as Raneë’ knew, Charles Burns had not published the book he wanted to write. It is reasonable to assume that had he published a book, he would have sent a copy to Raneë’ at the Heritage Room of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

The researcher endeavored to contact Charles Burns—she asked some of the elders of the former Pond Beat community if they knew who might have his telephone number. One

person who was questioned said Charles had passed away in Chicago. No one had heard of a book that he had written.

It is probable that Charles Burns wrote more pages about his family. Further inquiry was not within the time scope of this manuscript. However, a recommendation for further research is locating the telephone numbers of his children in Chicago and asking for a copy of any additional material written or compiled by Charles.

### **An Introduction to Charles Burns**

Charles Burns was the only child of John W. Burns and Clara Horton Burns. Clara's parents were Everett ("T.") Horton and Francis Lacy Horton. The Horton family has been discussed at length in another section of this report; however, Charles will provide insight about the personal lives of Everett and Francis and his aunts and uncles in the account of his boyhood. Francis Horton was a Lacy—her father was James Pensacola Lacy.

According to an interview by Ed Peters in the July 8, 1987 issue of the *Redstone Rocket*, Charles lived in Silver Hill in the area along Dodd Road where the test stands were later located; however, he was born at the home of his Grandparents Horton. His paternal grandfather, James Peter Burns, whom Charles referred to in his writing as "Poppa P. Burns," was a merchant and casket maker in the Mullins Flat community—his businesses were situated near where Building 4488 stands today (that location of Building 4488 is shown as owned by William G. Balch at the time of government purchase). In his handwritten account, Charles stated that his Poppa P. Burns "had a big farm, but he did not do the farming himself." Poppa P. ran a General Store, blacksmith shop and a cotton gin."

Tom Carney, editor of *Old Huntsville* magazine stated in August of 2005 (personal communication by telephone) that back in the era of the Pond Beat communities, people went to a blacksmith to get their stills made, and one blacksmith, who was very good at this was located near where Martin Road is today. Carney mentioned no name, but the location he described would match that of James P. Burns. During this conversation Carney noted that stills and moonshine did not have the stigma in those days that they do today.

In the 1987 interview with Peters, Charles Burns said that around 1980 he decided to visit the gravesite of his Grandfather Burns, whose memory he obviously cherished. He said things had changed so much in the half-century since he'd been there that it had taken him five years of research to determine where the cemetery was, and once he did find it, "it was so grown up that you couldn't even walk around there." He said the Army had designated the name for the cemetery as "Sam Moore Cemetery," named after the man who donated the land for it.

In further discussing his 1980 visit to the cemetery, Charles Burns said, "none of the graves have headstones, but some are marked with field stone." He knew the general location of plots where his Grandfather and Grandmother Burns and a great aunt and

uncle were buried because a cedar tree was planted at the head of each grave when the relative was interred. In 1986, Charles and other descendants bought a granite monument to mark the family graves. According to Ed Peters, Burns stated: "I appreciate them even in death and want my folks and everybody to know where my people are buried."

### **CHARLES BURNS—HIS MEMORIES OF GROWING UP AND HIS FAMILY**

The script from the 32-pages handwritten by Charles Burns was typed verbatim. The font has been changed to a script that lends itself to the personal nature of the account. The researcher has limited any inserted comments so as not to disrupt the flow of Charles' writing.

Earlier in this manuscript the Horton family was discussed. The reader will recognize the names and become more acquainted with the life and members of Everett Horton's family and the Burns family. Charles mentions in his writing that Mandy Lanier was the second wife of his Grandfather James P. Horton and the one who he knew as a grandmother when he was growing up. She was also the grandmother of Felix Lanier who was interviewed during the course of this research (Georgia and Felix Lanier interview). Mandy's son was Felix's father.

The location and description of the Silverhill School (C-132) was established in a previous section of this manuscript. In the memories of Charles, the names of other students who attended the school and additional names of teachers are found. Perhaps even more important, Charles presents a view of the fields, the streams, the boys who played, and the interaction of a family, including the love, the joys, the sorrows, and the problems.

### *Memories of Charles Burns* *written by Charles Burns*

*There comes a time in a busy man's life when a glance backwards over the road traveled turns him into a picture taker of sorts, and his life becomes a colorful path of memories connecting the past with the present. My life has been like that: a series of paths, each leading through a landscape of places and faces made dear to me by familiarity and family ties.*

*My earliest memories, childhood glimmerings, are of the paths that my family's feet had trod through the bottom land connecting my parents home in Mullins Flat, Madison County, Alabama, with the homes of my neighboring*

relatives. Perched precariously on my mother's back, she would carry me over large stretches of the 2 ½ mile trek to her parent's house. We were both often afraid as we were constantly running into snakes and lizards. I couldn't be looking down all the time because the blackberry, plum and grape vines would reach out and grab us. I was a heavy load for a little woman, and mother often rested on fallen trees or stumps. Sometimes she would cry and I would cry along with her.

We easily crossed many small streams on our way, but trouble usually started when we got to the bigger stream or creek named Windbank Springs. This is where my presence on Mother's back presented a big problem. She had to walk a log used to cross the creek. There was a long pole for steadying purposes, but sometimes I was so sure that she was going to fall off that I would let out a holler, fasten my hold around her neck and knock her off balance. To quiet me she would threaten that if I didn't stop choking her and crying, she would let the crap shooters, men who sometimes gathered in the woods shooting dice and swearing, get ahold of me. This usually did the trick and I would be very still. Sometimes it was too late though and we would come tumbling down with a splash. Even when it hurt and we both cried, I knew my mother loved me more than life and that she would protect me from everything.

Once over the creek, we arrived in a pasture. The cows and horses didn't scare me as long as they had their heads down grazing, but when they stopped eating and came up to me to smell and lick my legs, there was no way I was going to stay on the ground. I sprang for Mother's back and stayed there until we got to the old, creaky gate and stairs that separated the pasture from the tenant houses and Poppa Everett T. and Mamma Frances Lacy Horton's big house in Silver Hill.

Mother always had a friendly word with the families she would meet on the path and then when she would get up to the well, all of the aunts and uncles would run out to meet us. Each one would pick me up and hug and kiss me.

Poppa and Mama Horton's big house held many mysteries for a small boy. That house became a part of the rituals of my growing up. It was my habit as a toddler to inspect the whole house room by room. I am not sure whether I was looking for something in particular or if it was my way of stalling the climax of my inspection which occurred when I ascended to the attic. There amidst musky old clothes and

tempting home canned fruit my youngest aunt Maggie would be dressed in one of Mama Francis' fur coats made out of monkey hair waiting to jump out at me and scare the living daylights out of me. Down I'd scurry all the way to the front door, across the porch and out to the fruit orchards where if I was lucky my Uncle James Horton would grab me up and console me.

For one little boy, growing up an only child I had the biggest family this side of the Bible. My mother was a Horton. Her parents Everett T. and Francis Lacy Horton were wonderful grandparents to me. Mother Clara was their oldest child but she had plenty of younger brothers and sisters who all became devoted aunts and uncles to their first little nephew. There was James Horton, Booker T. Horton, Spencer E. Horton, Leona Horton, Celester Horton, Cebelle Horton and Maggie Horton. All of my aunts were beautiful and all of my uncles were handsome. They were all very light skinned and intelligent too.

My father, John W. Burns hailed from an equally large family. When I knew him Grandfather James Peter Burns was married to his second wife, Amanda Lanier Burns. She had one son, Jeremiah M. Lanier, who was half-brother to my father and his brother Oscar Burns and James Peter Burns II. She had one daughter, Ophelia Burns, who was half sister to his sisters aadie [sic], Dora, Eliza, Betty and Agerian Burns.

With so many aunts and uncles, I was assured enough cousins to play with. Uncle Oscar, Aunt Lixa and cousins Jabo, Robert, Taylor, and Grace lived only a few fields and streams away. The path between the two houses was well worn. In each yard, Uncle Oscar and my dad put a pole in the ground with a plank across it, with seats on each end and a large iron bolt in the middle holding everything together, allowing someone to push it around and around. This wonderful contraction [contraption?] was called a flying ginny. I got many a fall from it because I would go so fast for so long that I would be drunk and swimming in the head. It was easy to slide off, especially if the direction was abruptly changed.

Much of our play was with nature's elements. Being little and close to the ground we spent a lot of time there. Our games of leap frog would often end in a search for frogs so we could watch them jump and swim and race them to see which was the

*fastest. Still down on our knees we would delight in watching the tumblebug. We would find his small hole in the ground, get a small straw or twig, spit on it and put it down the hole to attract the tumblebug out of his hole. Once out of the hole, the tumblebug would head straight for some cow, pig or horse manure, get into it, then make a marble out of it and roll it all the way back to his hole. We wouldn't see that tumblebug again until it had eaten the marble up and was ready for more.*

*We also played with the tumblebugs, spending hours chasing them with shingles from the roof of the house or barn. June bugs that we captured with jars provided entertainment too. We would tie a long string to one of their legs and let them fly for hours or until their leg came off. We would even tie string around the necks of snakes and race them. There were a lot of poisonous snakes, water moccasins, copperheads and rattlers. We knew which ones to play with.*

*When we played in the fields, a lot of the smaller farm animals like the baby horses, goats and pigs played along with us. We had special ponds where the boys would go swimming. My favorite was a lily pond with beautiful lilies everywhere. It was approximately 100 square feet [he may have meant 100 feet by 100 feet—square feet would have been too small to match his description] surrounded by tall trees with muscadine vines all over them. We would swim and sunbathe in the mud until it dried all over our bodies. Then we would march like stiff-legged monsters back into the water and play for hours. When we got hungry we would reach up and eat wild grapes and muscadines.*

*The day usually caught up with us there at the pond and we'd have to race home in time for a bath before supper. I would always get sleepy before my bath but I never got out of taking it.*

*I can remember how strict my mother was about cleanliness, of the house and of my personal things. She always wanted me and dad to be neat. She was a thorough housekeeper. Why she even kept the yard swept clean. She had chickens, ducks, geese, little kittens, dogs and baby pigs as pets. But the yard stayed clean.*

*Not to be outdone, my father, John Wesley Burns, was in the cleaning business too. He took clothes from the neighbors which he then cleaned and pressed. I remember one day when he had finished pressing and had placed the hot iron out on the edge of the porch to cool, I decided to play with it. While I didn't burn myself as well*

*I might, in the motion of pushing the iron back and forth, the iron fell off the porch and I fell with it. That was a frightening experience.*

*My father was a real go-getter. He rose with the sun to do the early chores like milking the cows and feeding the hogs, mules, horses and chickens. He often had to mend the fences because the cattle were always pushing into them and the horses would kick them down. After his outdoor activities, father would come in and take up one of his other occupations. Besides cleaning clothes, he also built swings. But his major source of income was from sales. Father sold all kinds of books and all kinds of insurance. Because he was a businessman, he dressed very nice and was always on the go. Mother would fix a big breakfast for us at about 10:00 A.M. and then my father would saddle up his horse and be on his way selling. There were many days when he would hitch the horse and buggy and take us to Mamma Frances and Poppa T.'s house on his way to work. When he finished, he would stop and pick us up to go home. But we always ate supper there first.*

*Poppa T. and Mamma Frances were a beautiful couple. They had twelve children. Even as late as 1917 there would usually be ten of us around the supper table. My grandfather would always say the blessing. He sat at the head of the table and my grandmother sat at the other end. After supper all of the aunts and uncles would clear the table and wash the dishes. After that we would head for home. Mom and Dad would stay awake, but the rhythm of that old buggy and the steady clop of the horses' hooves always rocked me to sleep before we got home.*

*Then there were the times on weekend and holidays that we would spend the night or whole weekend at Poppa T.'s. Those occasions were great and fun. In the summer time everyone would get around the piano and sing or they would play Edison's "graphnola." In the winter when night came early we would sit around the huge fireplace and read or tell jokes and laugh a lot. There was plenty of candy, cookies and nuts for all. The men would have a drink of wine or whiskey. Poppa T. always had a keg of Bourbon whiskey he would order from Louisville, Kentucky. Mama Frances made wine for holidays. The fire, drink and food made everybody sleepy, and the pleasant evening would end in the assignment of bedrooms for the large group.*

*My aunts would all share a room with two beds to split between the three of them, putting two in one bed. When I spent the night, I slept between my Aunt Maggie and Cebelle. My mother would sleep with Celester in the other bed. My father would sleep in a room with her brothers Spencer and Booker T. A hired hand slept there too. In a child's eyes it was fun to be so packed close together. From the aunts' giggles and the uncles' guffaws, I know they loved it too.*

*We spent nights and weekends with Poppa P. Burns and Grandma Amanda. Grandfather Burns had a big farm, but he did not do any farming himself. It was done by farmhands. Poppa P. ran a General Store, blacksmith shop and a cotton gin.*

*A cluster of childhood memories circles around World War I. I was four years old when it started. My dad and all his brothers received letters from Uncle Sam—I hadn't met him yet—calling upon them to enlist in the armed forces. J.P. Burns and his brother Jerry Lanier went into the army. They both went to England and France and finally to Germany. When they came back they brought with them helmets, gas masks, guns and swords and some great war stories.*

*The end of the war in 1918 was overcast at our house by the final illness and death of Grandfather Burns on March 22, 1919.*

*Poppa P. was a fine man, very attached to me, his first grandson, and I to him. His country store was like Santaland to me. He had everything anyone could want. There was sawdust on the floors. I liked to run my toes through it and form my letters or shape a heart for my mom. I was always fascinated by the store and being there with him. The smells especially caught my attention. Even when I wasn't hungry, the scent of peppermint candy, cheese, peanuts, pickles and balony triggered my appetite.*

*Sometimes Poppa P. would get tired of the store and close it, and we would walk to the house where some of the family and friends were picking cotton. Granddaddy would put me on a cotton sack and pull me on it when he picked cotton. He liked the fresh air and feel of fall that accompanied cotton picking time in north Alabama. I used to feel like that cotton sack was my magic carpet and when we would get to the end of the row, Poppa P. would sit down and put me across his lap*

and sing a song. In it, he was working on a building for his Lord, but before he finished his song which he accompanied by patting me on the behind with his hand, I would be fast asleep. Then he would carry me to the house and I would wake up when he put me down.

Grandma Amanda would fix us lunch and he would sit down to a big meal of turnip greens, cornbread, potatoes and milk followed by blackberry pie. Before eating, we always said the blessing. After eating, we would take a nap and then head back to the store. I felt like such a big little man. When he closed the store at dark, we would come back home. After supper we would go out on the front porch and I would always sit on Poppa P.'s lap.

Poppa P. Burns' death was a big shock to me. [James P. Burns died of double pneumonia in 1919.] I remember the day of the wake and funeral as if it was today. I was frightened, not by him, but by the thought that they were going to bury him in the ground. Every thing was black that day. The funeral director, Mr. Golson, was a handsome jet black man. The horse was black and so was the hearse [sic]. And everybody was wearing black clothing. I walked along beside the hearse to the graveyard. It was the saddest half-mile of my life. The day was gloomy, the road was bumpy and rough. This was the first time that I had seen anyone buried. When I saw the top of the casket close and his casket lowered into the ground for the first time in my life I felt a terrible feeling of loneliness. I couldn't understand what was happening. It was all so sad and terrible and frightening to a small boy. The ground which had been a source of comfort and pleasure for me, the good earth which had always been my playground, had all of a sudden taken my grandfather from me. I mourned his death for a very long time.

My early childhood, that time of magic, dreams and vivid imagination, gave way with Poppa P.'s death to the growing pains of dealing with real life. The lives around me were changing too. Uncle Oscar Burns found better land and moved to the city of Huntsville, Alabama. Uncle J.P. Burns bought a farm of about 80 acres and built a beautiful six-room house on it. About a half mile away my dad moved us to a bigger farm called the Fendle [Fennell] Place. Approximately 80 acres

of land were lush with creeks, ponds, stands of timber and fertile fields. We even had our own cemetery which dad made available to the community.

This area of southwest Madison County was called *Threes Place*. All of the land at one time had belonged to whites. Now, if a Negro was able to, he could buy it. Between my mother's family and my father's, they together owned about 2,000 acres in close proximity. We had everything we needed. Most relatives lived within hollering distance. Mother's brother, Uncle James Horton, lived the farthest, about a half mile away. We had our own stores, schools and churches. The community was integrated, too, but the whites were not landowners. They were tenants.

Everyone was friendly and worked well together. They raised cotton to sell but the rest of the products were for themselves to live on.

I didn't see much use for school with all of life's bounty so close at hand. It is time I wondered about distant names and places like Chicago and New York that I would hear the adults mention. But still, I wasn't quite sure school was where you really learned about such things. My teachers wanted me to learn to read and write. These teachers were my aunts and cousins and they gave over to me, yielding to my shenanigans. They loved me but it wasn't any good for them to do this for me. When an outside teacher was hired, I had to calm down and get busy studying at school and at home. That was quite a jolt.

Uncle James Horton had six children, three boys and three girls. We all went to school and did everything together. Their names were James, Mae, Ovoy, Leroy, Mildred and Willie. Like my father, Uncle James was a farmer, but he hired people to do his farming for him too. He was more of a sportsman and hired his service out to the white people who wanted to hunt wild ducks, geese and small game. The white men would spend the night in his large barn up in the hayloft. All the men, including my father, would make home brew and corn whiskey and enjoy it at hunting time. Sometimes my father and Uncle James would hide a keg of corn whiskey or home brew in the fields for the hungry hunters.

One hot summer day, cousin James Bruce and I were playing and wandered off into a cornfield. Lo and behold, we stumbled onto a keg of corn whiskey and decided to see that it really tasted like. I lay on my back and James Bruce put the

keg to my mouth, and I drank until it ran down my neck onto my clothes. Then it was his turn. They found us still there on the ground, sick and drunk, about three hours later. I don't remember that we got into any trouble, but I do know that neither of us likes corn whiskey to this day. We may drink it, but we're not crazy about it.

I was eight years old when tragedy came to our close-knit community, striking my own family. Some people had begun stealing cotton, hay, corn, hogs, chickens and other things off our farms. My Uncle James Horton had been missing cotton and found out that his stolen cotton was being bought by his brother-in-law Bassie Rice. He talked to Bassie about this, asking him to repay the cotton or to give him money for it. For weeks they argued but only added to the ill will between them.

Finally, on December 1, 1922 Uncle James ran out of patience and rose early in the morning to confront Bassie Rice. Uncle James came to our house on his way. He called his sister, my mother Clara, out to the porch. When she saw how angry he was, Mother called dad and me out. We were all gathered at the wood pile trying to calm Uncle James. But like that wood destined soon to be consumed in flames, Uncle James could not be turned from his resolve to get his cotton or money from Bassie Rice. Mother cried and begged him not to go. Bassie had threatened Uncle James' life several times, and we could see Uncle James' small pearl handled 32 pistol glinting in the early sunlight from his waist belt. Mother could sense the danger and grabbed hold of Uncle James' arm. But Uncle James began to walk away and finally got his arm loose from her.

We watched him until he got to Bassie Rice's house and shouted for Rice to show himself. When Rice appeared we could see and hear them arguing. An old cultivator stood between the two men silently offering them one last chance for conciliation. But both men whirled out from behind it and fired. We do not know who fired first, but they both fell to the ground.

We flew to Uncle James, his still body lying in a pool of blood. He had been shot through the head and died within three or four minutes. Bassie Rice was shot in the groin and leg, but in his desperation he fled on a horse. We found out later that he had gone into West Huntsville to give himself up to the sheriff.

*My father took command, comforting Uncle James' wife Ella Dee. He sent a hired man on horseback to get Grandfather Horton, Booker T. and Spencer. They lived about three miles away. In the stillness of that morning we could hear Poppa T.'s motor start up. Within thirty minutes they had arrived. Poppa T. had his 30 caught 06 rifle and left trying to overtake Bassie. When that effort failed Poppa T. rode on into Huntsville to the funeral home to get the undertaker who came out, picked up the body and brought it to our house. There in our living room, the body of Uncle James was embalmed. They let me watch the embalming. The burial took place in the Glenwood Cemetery in Huntsville, about ten miles from our family homes in Silverhill, old Fendle [Fennell] Place, Threes Place, Mullins Flat and the Bottoms.*

*Bassie Rice was tried for cotton theft and was sentenced to one year in prison. He was not held for the murder of Uncle James since the killing occurred on Rice's own property. Cousin Bruce Horton vowed to kill Bassie Rice if he ever showed his face in Huntsville. When he was freed, Rice never came back.*

*It was a good thing that he didn't return because we had hatred in our hearts for Bassie at that time. We heard that he went to Louisville, Kentucky. Later we were told that someone had killed Bassie Rice in Louisville.*

*After Uncle James death, Aunt Celestine Horton continued her farming along with her children, my father, mother, and myself. We drew even closer together in our effort to fill in the lonely times and blank spaces left by my gallant, headstrong and loving Uncle James Horton.*

The following list was with Charles Burns' handwritten pages:

*Elixa J. Burns*

*Born: July 15, 1882*

*Died: Oct. 23, 1977*

*John W. Burns*

*Born: Feb. 20, 1892*

*Died: Dec. 17, 1961*

*Doral Burns*

*Born: Aug 20, 1885*

*Died: April 11, 1955*

*Missouria Burns*

*Born: Sept. 12, 1844*

*Died: May 29, 1955*

*Mary L. Burns*

*Born: Feb. 15, 1885*

*Died: Mar. 10, 1957*

*J.P. Burns Jr.*

*Born: Feb 15, 1896*

*Died: Dec, 1, 1982*

*Cora A. Burns I*

*Born Aug 15, 1886*

*Died: Sept. 25, 1886*

*Baby Boy Born Dead*

*Feb. 21, 1897*

*Oscar R. Burns*

*Born: Aug. 25, 1889*

*Died: Aug. 10, 1980*

*Ophelia Burns*

*Born: Oct. 19, 1901*

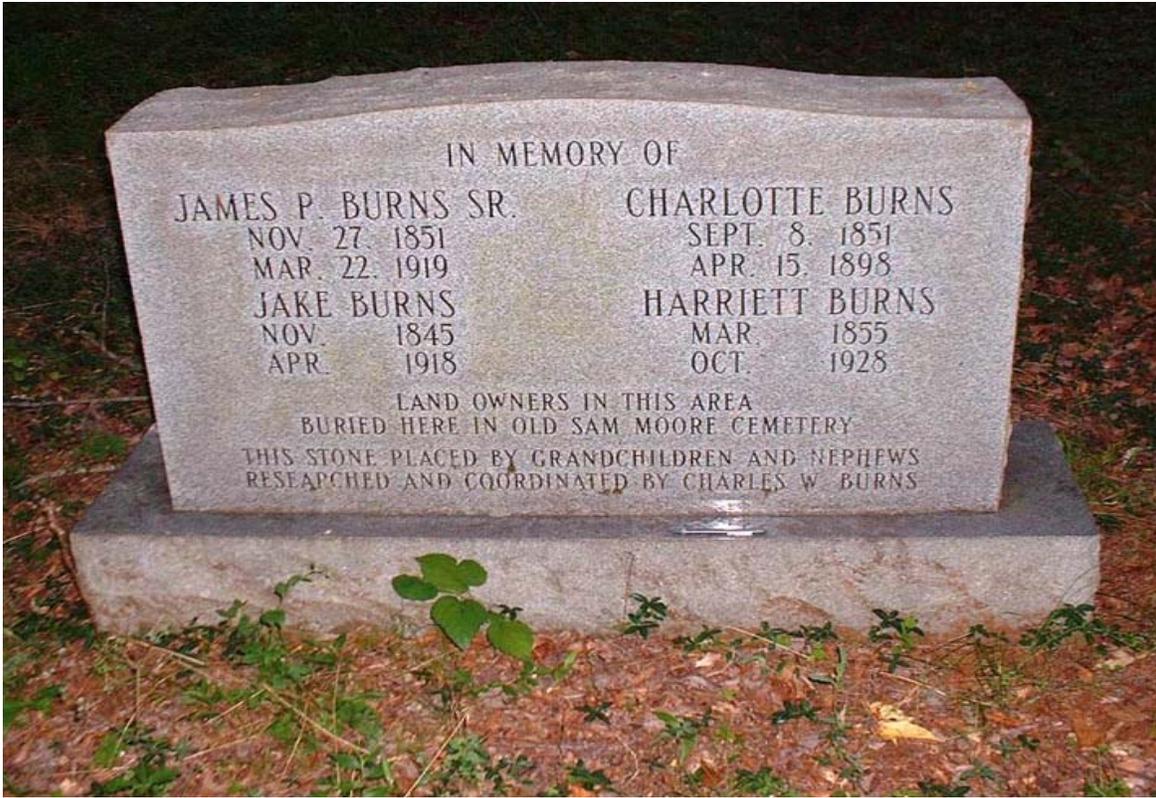
*Died: Aug. 30, 1942*

*Virginia A. Burns*

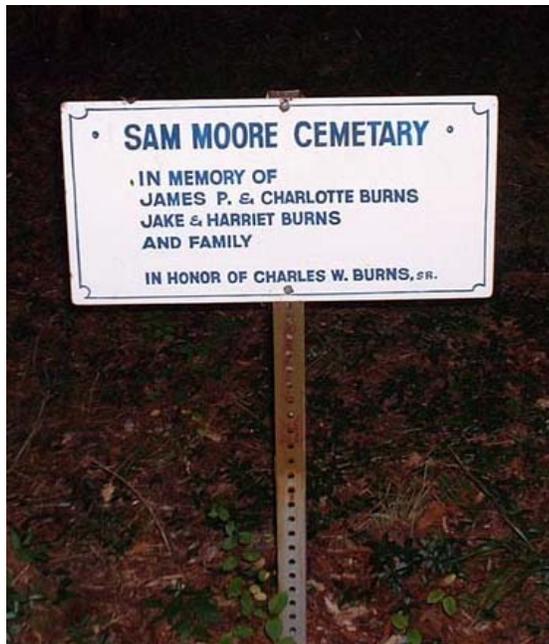
*Born: Dec. 3, 1890*

*Died: Dec. 10, 1890*

*NOTE: Grandpa J. P. was married to Mrs. Amanda Lanier, Feb 3, 1900. To this union was born Ophelia Burns. Grandma Mandy died April 26, 1927.*



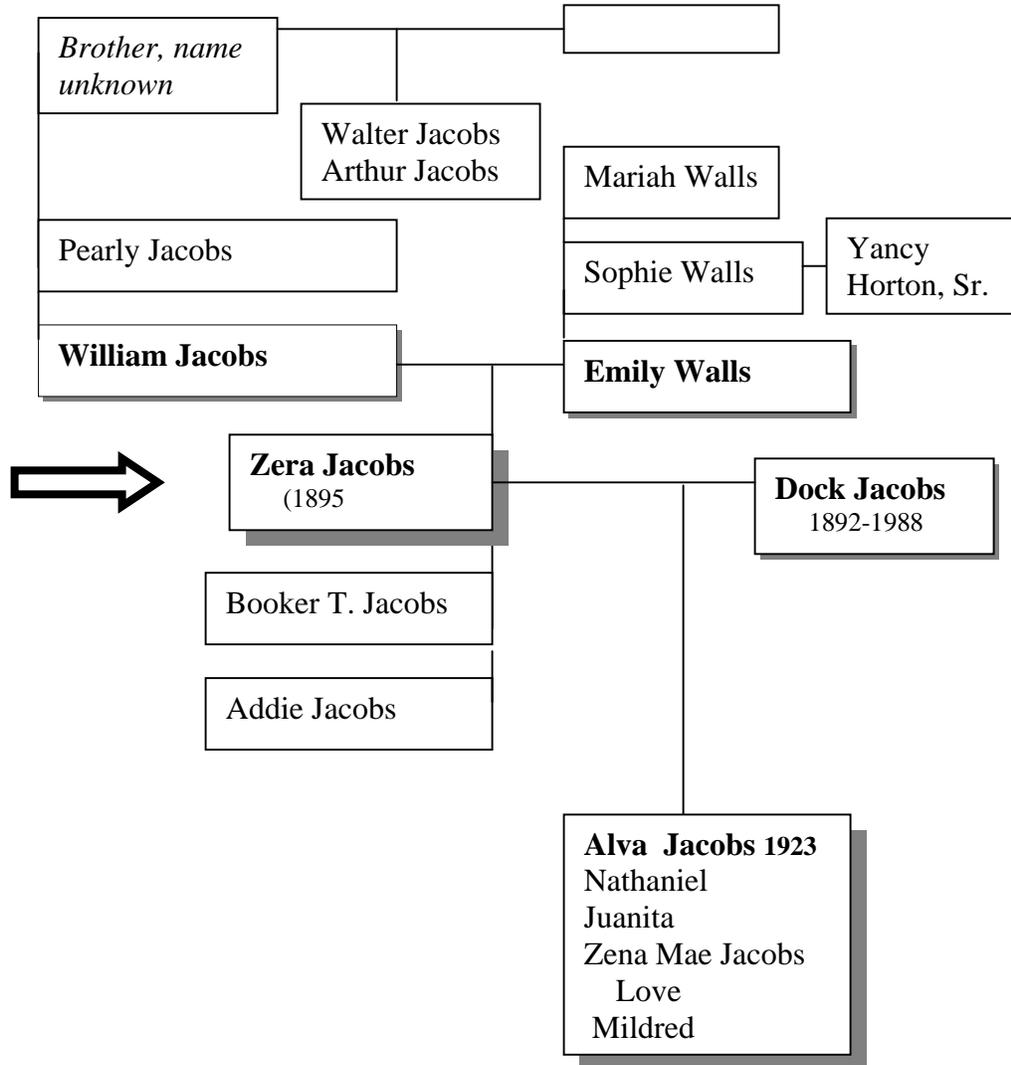
**Burns memorial monuments placed in the Moore-Landman Cemetery on Redstone Arsenal by the grandchildren and nephews of Charles W. Burns. Their knowledge of the people, dates, and cemetery name was based on the knowledge and research passed down to them by Charles W. Burns. Photographs by John P. Rankin, 2002.**



## THE JACOBS FAMILY

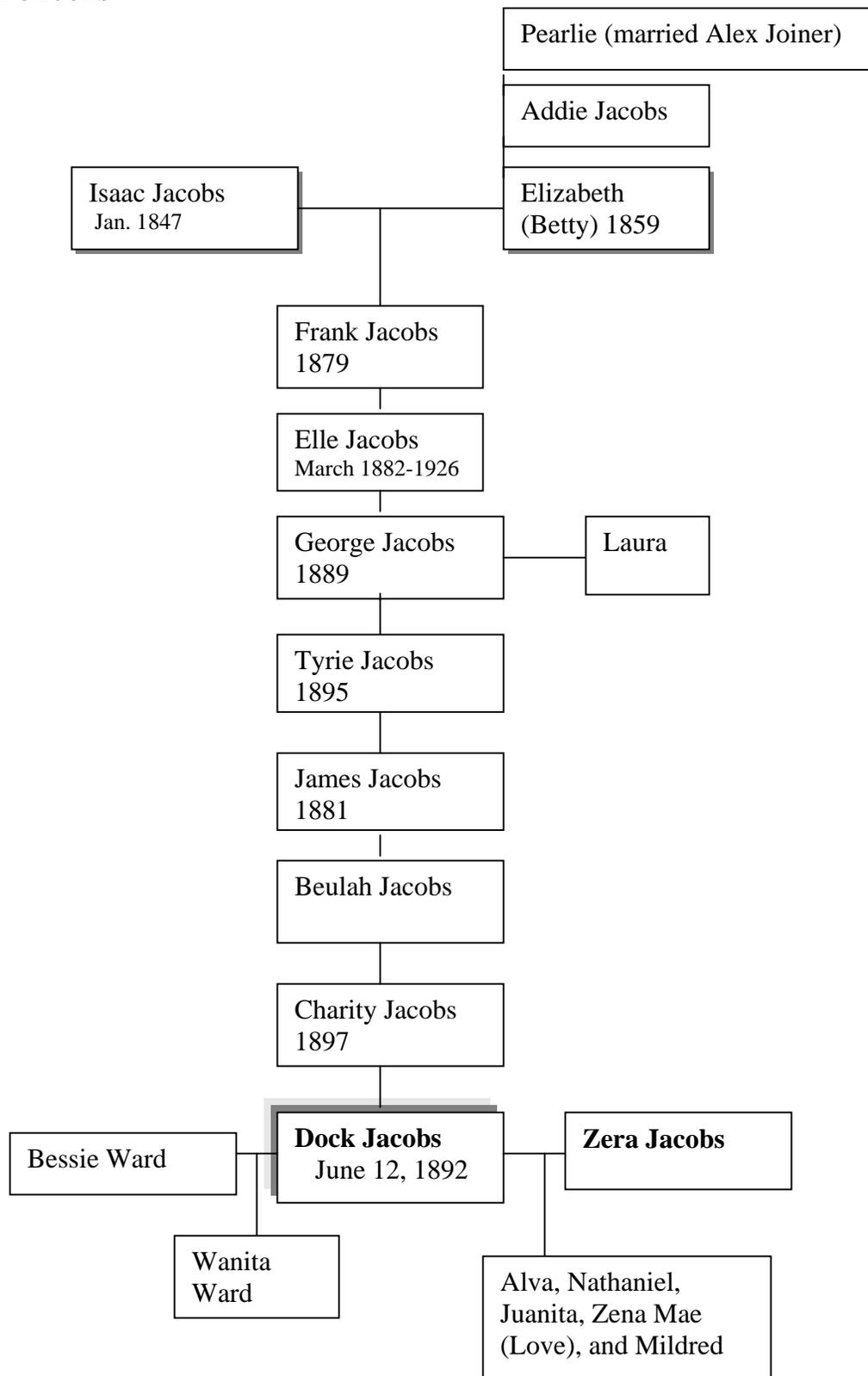
The first drawing is the family chart of Zera Jacobs. The second drawing is the chart of her husband, Dock Jacobs. Jacobs was Zera's maiden name as well as her married name. Dock and Zera Jacobs are the parents of Alva Jacobs, whose interview is presented next. The charts were drawn as information was gathered. The researcher sent the charts to a Jacobs family member who had said she would look at them and give feedback, but a follow-up call indicated the person had good intentions but a busy schedule. No further calls were made after the researcher left Huntsville.

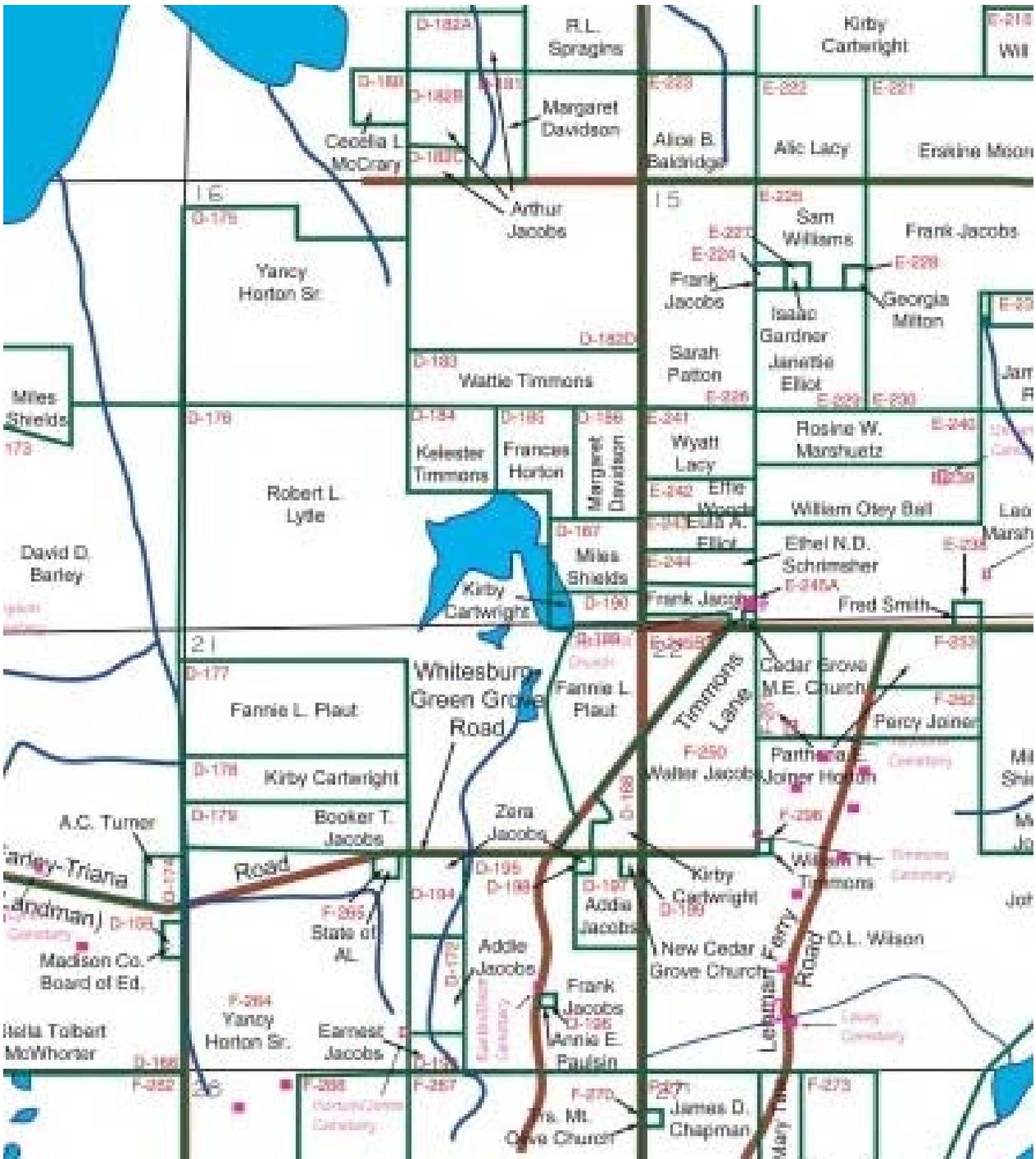
### ZERA JACOBS



In looking at the next chart, for Dock Jacobs, notice that the Isaac Jacobs shown was born in 1847. According to historic researcher John Rankin, another Isaac Jacobs was born August 1845, so distinguishing them could be confusing. John says they were cousins—part of a group of Jacobs families from South Carolina that came with matriarch Fanny Jacobs (b. 1778 in SC). Rankin speculates that other Jacobs families were headed by her children who were: Burrell (1801), Unity (1817), Thomas (1801), Isaac (1803), Oliver (1808) and (Rebecca 1807). They were born in South Carolina. All of the above people were listed as “Mulatto,” and Rankin asserts they were free in order to be named on the census records in 1850.

**FOR DOCK JACOBS**





The central and part of the lower area of Pond Beat. The Farley-Triana Road is a reference point. Source: Map created for the Army by Alexander Archaeological Consultants.

The property of the Jacobs family members discussed in the following interview is shown; it is not inclusive of all Jacobs land ownership. The Yancy Horton property can be seen adjoining that of the Jacobs.

**ALVA JACOBS** [INCLUDING A DISCUSSION DRAWING FROM OTHER SOURCES]  
Interview July 2005

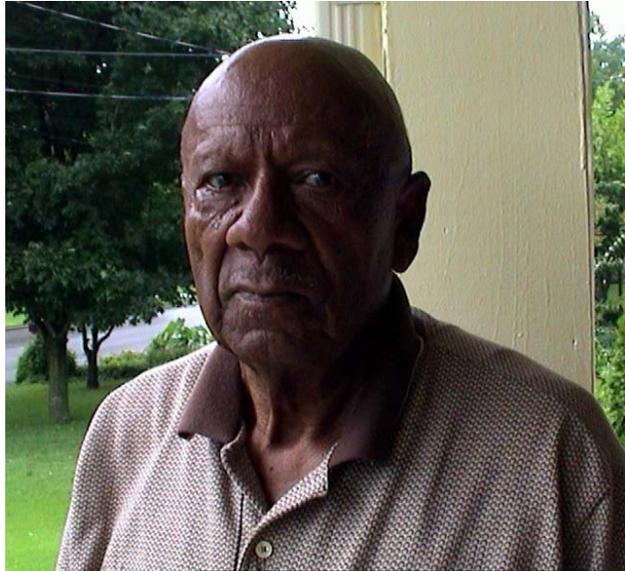
**Alva's Family**

Alva's wife is Gladys Taylor Jacobs.

Alva Jacobs was born in March of 1923, the son of Dock Jacobs and Zera Jacobs.

Dock was born in 1892 in Mullins Flat. He was a soldier in World War I. Dock's brothers and sisters were George, Frank, James, Joe, Tarrie, Beulah, Charity, and Mildred, who died at a young age.

Dock's brother George Jacobs married Laura; their children were Elle, James, and Frank Jacobs.



**Alva Jacobs in 2005.**

Zera and Dock's children were Alva, Juanita, Nathaniel, Mildred, and Zena. Juanita was a half sister to Alva (different mothers). Juanita was born prior to Dock's marriage to Zera, and her mother was Bessie Ward.

Zera and Alva both had the family name of Jacobs. The fact is noted to avoid confusion in understanding the relationship between landowners. When asked if his parents were related, Alva said he was not certain.

Alva's maternal grandmother (Zera's mother) was Emily Walls Jacobs, who died "in the early 1930's when she was between 80 and 85 years old." Emily's sister Sophie was married to Yancy Horton. Zera's father was William Jacobs. Pearly Jacobs was William's sister.

Alva's paternal grandfather (Dock's father) was Isaac Jacob and his paternal grandmother was Elizabeth (Betty). They were married December 23, 1878

Dock and other family members of Isaac Jacobs are shown on the 1900 census index presented on the next page. The index shows that Elizabeth (Betty) was born in 1859 and was 40 years old when the census was taken. Her husband, Isaac, born in 1847, was a few years older than she. From this index we have the birthdates of their children: Frank (1879), James (1881), Elle (1884), George (1889), Joseph (1890), Dorothy (1892), Tyra (1895), and Charity Ann (1897). Alva listed a sister Beulah, who must have been born after 1900.

1900 AL SONDEN J212 (JACOBS)

Jacobs, Isaac  
 (HEAD OF FAMILY)

VOL. 38 E.D. 99  
 SHEET 37 LINE 55

B (DOB) 1847 (YEAR) 53 (AGE) Alabama (BIRTHPLACE)  
 Madison (COUNTY) (CITY) (STREET) (HOUSE NO.)  
 (CITIZENSHIP) Pat. Huntsville (B. C. D.)

7

OTHER MEMBERS OF FAMILY

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	BIRTH		AGE	BIRTHPLACE	CITIZENSHIP
		MONTH	YEAR			
<u>Jacobs, Britie</u>	W	June	1859	40	Alabama	
— <u>Frank</u>	S	Nov	1879	20	Alabama	
— <u>James</u>	S	Dec	1881	18	Alabama	
— <u>Ellie</u>	S	Mich	1884	16	Alabama	
— <u>George</u>	S	May	1889	11	Alabama	

1900 CENSUS—INDEX  
 DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
 BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

#1  
 Sum #2

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 11-11871 A-1a

Jacobs, Isaac  
 (HEAD OF FAMILY—CONTINUED)

OTHER MEMBERS OF FAMILY—CONTINUED

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	BIRTH		AGE	BIRTHPLACE	CITIZENSHIP
		MONTH	YEAR			
— <u>Joseph</u>	S	May	1891	9	Alabama	
— <u>Edith</u>	S	Aug	1892	7	Alabama	
— <u>Lyn</u>	S	May	1895	5	Alabama	
— <u>Charity Ann</u>	D	Oct	1897	2	Alabama	

1900 CENSUS—INDEX  
 DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
 BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

#2  
 Sum #1

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 11-11871 A-1b

The 1900 Census-Index, Department of Commerce.

## Connecting the Puzzle Pieces

Rather than presenting the sections about daily and community life as it is remembered by Alva Jacobs immediately following the family history information he related, this section breaks from form. The Jacobs family provides the opportunity to show how various pieces of research can be brought into “rebuilding” the past. As the archaeologist records each artifact and the context in which it was found, the ethnographer collects verbal and written “artifacts” and so must analyze their context and place in time. This section analyzes the family history as presented by Alva Jacobs, the memories of the late Lizzie (Bessie) Ward, and documentation obtained from Dennis Simpson about his ancestors supplemented with the research on those buried in a White cemetery conducted by John Rankin. Archival records photographed by John Rankin were examined. This section illustrates the steps made in connecting research during the course of this study.

**The Rankin-Dixon Cemetery Research.** A few years ago Mr. John Rankin offered to photograph cemeteries on RSA. Having completed that task, he went on to conduct archival research on those who owned the land and the families who were buried in the cemeteries. John has shared his research, his knowledge and his contacts.

Collectively, the Jacobs family owned a notable amount of land in the former communities of Mullins Flat and Pond Beat, with the largest landowner in the family being Frank Jacobs. The cemetery listed by RSA as the Rankin-Dixon Cemetery is within the parcel of land D-196 that was owned by Frank Jacobs. Thus, the researcher conferred with John Rankin regarding the history of the cemetery.

Through e-mail, John Rankin introduced the researcher to Dennis Simpson. In an e-mail dated April 21, 2005, Dennis Simpson provided information about the property where the cemetery is located and the history of the land’s ownership.

This history of the buying and selling of this property is typical of what was happening in Madison County during the 1800’s. The excerpt from Dennis Simpson’s e-mail letter, dated April 21, 2005, presented below will acquaint the reader with Frank Jacobs’ land purchase and the context in which it occurred:

The property where the cemetery is situated was purchased by John Simpson on June 23, 1855. He purchased the property consisting of 435 acres from [the] Dr. John Henderson Hundley family. The Hundley’s were a well-known family who moved to the southeastern section of Limestone County, Alabama. They were very wealthy, but like so many Southerners, lost everything when Union Soldiers stripped them of everything they owned during those dark days of the American Civil War. John Simpson paid the Hundley’s \$3000 for the property. It remained in the family all the way up to 1918 when after the death of Uncle Henry Clay Simpson on February 26, 1918, his brother-in-law, John Alexander Steger, petitioned the court to be administrator of the

estate. He sold the land on August 19, 1918 to Robert Murphey for the bidding price of \$12,650.00. John Alexander Steger was Madison County's last Confederate Soldier. He died in Birmingham, Alabama and is buried beside his wife, Mary Ella (Simpson) Steger, at the family cemetery in Ryland, Alabama across the street from Shiloh Methodist Church.

The land apparently did not stay with Robert Murphey long for it was sold to a wealthy Black man by the name of Frank Jacobs. The Jacobs family lived in the area before the Civil War as free men.

Frank Jacobs also owned the Dickson-Graham-Rankin plantation. This was the property of Margaret Ann (Dickson) Simpson's parents, James Dickson and Keziah Wood. James Dickson entered Madison County, Alabama before February of 1818. On that date, he purchased 79.78 acres in the West half of the Southeast quarter, Section 14, Township 5, Range 2, West.

The fact that Jacobs family members were classified as "Mulatto" but were free during the time of the Civil War makes it reasonable to assume a White male ancestor. This could explain financial backing that enabled the Jacobs family members to own a significant amount of land. Dennis Simpson noted (e-mail 4/27/05) that Dr. William Simpson, Hopkins Lacy, Thomas Austin and William Robinson founded Ditto Landing, which was near the town of Liberty back then. William Simpson died in 1816, and Austin and Robinson both died in 1819 [Lacy purchased their interest]. Dennis Simpson then added: "Thomas Austin's widow married Joseph G. Jacobs, who I believe was the white father of Frank Jacobs." [The name Frank Jacobs occurs in the generations of the Jacobs family prior to the Frank Jacobs of Pond Beat who has been introduced in this manuscript.]

**Combining Archival and Ethnographic Information--Speculating.** Having reviewed information from Dennis Simpson, the researcher studied the interview of Lizzie Ward, who she recalled being descended from a Jacobs, and wrote the following speculation:

This study has found that many of the well-known families of Pond Beat and Mullins Flat descended from the union of Pearlie Jacobs and Alex Joiner. [Alex Joiner was the son of William Timmons (White) and Luisa, Timmons' slave, who gave Alex the name of Joiner when she later married "a man named Joiner."]

Lizzie (Bessie) Ward, born in 1900, a daughter of Alex Joiner and Pearlie Jacobs, who passed away at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century only months after she was interviewed, told the researcher that Pearlie wasn't White but was "set aside as a free nation." Lizzie Ward, a "Black" woman whose complexion was so light that she more accurately could be described as White, had the warm and kindly disposition and manner that fits the image our society has long associated with that of the ideal

grandmother. She was alert of mind, but weak of body and easily tired, as she sat in her wheelchair by her bed in the home of her niece Lucille Rooks. The researcher questioned what “set aside as a free Nation” meant. Lizzie said that was just what she was always told. She was not pressed further to remember because of her fragile condition.

Nevertheless, the association of Pearlie Jacobs who was described as being “set aside as a free Nation” and Frank Jacobs, who was a free Black man before the onset of the Civil War and bought property that was once “set aside as a free Nation” lends itself to speculation and further inquiry.

[Note: “Set apart as a free nation” refers to Indian possession of the land. The Indians ceded the land in 1816. While the land encompassed in RSA was once part of the Indian hunting grounds, no historic Indian villages were located there. In 1816 a survey of the ceded land was initiated, but the first date of legal sale was in February of 1818.]

**Alva Jacobs Family Information.** Having drawn up family trees for the parents of Alva Jacobs and studied the information from the Alva Jacobs interview and analyzing it as a whole with the Lizzie Ward interview and the land purchase records provided by Dennis Simpson, the researcher again called Alva Jacobs seeking more names and marriages in the family line. All the data indicated a connecting ancestor with Lizzie Ward.

The second interview yielded the information that Alva’s maternal grandfather’s sister was Pearlie Jacobs, who married Alex Joiner. This name was added to the “family tree.” This connection took the Jacobs family back to the woman [Pearlie] who married the son of William Timmons (Alex Joiner) and was the mother Lizzie Ward had described as being “set apart as a free Nation.” Lizzie was Alex’s sister. The connection between Alva Jacobs and Pearly Jacobs had been determined. However, the questions remained: Was there a connection between Frank and Pearlie? Was Pearlie born free?

**One More Look at Archival Documents.** As stated earlier, archival documentation is beyond the scope of this study; however, at times one cannot stop the pursuit. Thus, some of the documents found are presented and discussed.

On June 4, 1934, Everett Horton signed a sworn statement in the Madison County Records regarding the ownership of a 22-acre tract of land in Pond Beat. Everett Horton swore that his grandfather, Burwell [Burrell] Jacobs, Sr., died about the year 1890 while occupying his homestead on that tract. He did not have a will and “there was no administration had upon his estate.” Everett Horton attested to the fact that upon his grandfather’s death, his uncle, George Jacobs, became owner of the estate and lived upon it until his death about the year 1907. George Jacobs never married, and upon his death, “his heirs at law conveyed this land to Lucien Jacobs.” The statement goes on to state that Lucien Jacobs mortgaged the land to Steel and Cartwright, who Everett understood to have foreclosed on the mortgage, and then sold the tract to his

[Everett's] uncle, Burwell Jacobs, Jr. The description of the land and its location can be read in the photograph of Everett Horton's statement:

STATE OF ALABAMA,  
MADISON COUNTY.

The undersigned Everett Horton, after being first duly sworn according to law, deposes and says on his oath as follows, to wit:

I am 58 years of age, and am a nephew of Burwell Jacobs, who has made application for a loan from the Federal Land Bank on lands in Sections 8 and 17 of Township 5 range 1 West, and a grandson of Burwell Jacobs, Sr. who owned that tract of land in Section 17 known as the west half of the Northeast quarter. I have known this land for at least fifty years or as far back as I can remember. My grandfather, Burwell Jacobs died about the year 1890, while occupying the aforesaid west half of the northeast quarter of Section 17, township 5 south range 1 west as a homestead. He died without a will and there was no administration had upon his estate

After the death of my grandfather, Burwell Jacobs, Sr. My uncle, George Jacobs became possessor of a tract described as 22 acres, in Pond Beat, bounded on the south and west by M A Simpson, on the north by Lewellyn Jordan and on the east by Burwell Jacobs, and lived upon it until his death about the year 1907. The said George Jacobs was never married; after his death his heirs at law conveyed this land to Lucien Jacobs, by deed recorded in the Probate Office of Madison County, Alabama, in Deed Book 97, page 401. This deed does not recite the township, range, or section, but of my own knowledge it is the west half of the northeast quarter of Section 17, Township 5, Range 1 West. Lucien Jacobs mortgaged the land to Steele and Cartwright, who, I understand, foreclosed the mortgage, and then sold this certain tract to my uncle, Burwell Jacobs, Jr. in 1915, since which time he has been in open, and undisputed possession and control, of said land.

The said 22 acre tract is that portion which George Jacobs inherited from my grandfather, Burwell Jacobs, Sr. I understand there is no deed of record to him, but I know this to be the fact.

To all of which I solemnly swear to be true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Subscribed and sworn to  
before me this 4th  
day of June, 1934.

NOTARY PUBLIC

Everett Horton sworn statement regarding property of Burwell [Burrell] Jacobs. Photographed by John P. Rankin. [Note: the same type of sworn statement was signed by L.A. Love.]

While Everett's statement is enlightening about land ownership in the Jacobs's family, it also reveals kinship ties. Everett states that Burwell (Burrell) Jacobs, Sr., who died in 1890, was his grandfather. None of the elderly people interviewed in this study

could remember the name of the father of Amanda Jacobs. Since Amanda Jacobs was Everett Horton's mother, identifying Burwell Jacobs, Sr. as his grandfather adds one more generation back on the family lineage that was compiled during the Horton family interviewing. This tie also connects the Horton and Jacobs family lines. A Burrell Jacobs was in America as early as 1790, evidenced in the page copied below. **NOTE: The name has appeared spelled as both Burwell and Burrell.**

William Fox	1	3	2	5
Zachariah Jacobs	1	3	6	
Burwell Jacobs	1	2	4	
Isaac Harris	1	3	5	
Paul Powers	1	1	3	2
Henry Hunter	1			6
John English	1		1	4
Widow Sims		2	3	2
Thomas Hutchinson	1	2	3	9
John Bigler	1	2	1	1
	13	46	78	173

An excerpt from the 1790 Richland County, South Carolina census (p. 145).

The researcher consulted John P. Rankin, and he explained the following:

Enumerators of the 1790 census were asked to include the following categories in the census: name of head of household, number of free White males of sixteen years and older, number of free White males under sixteen years, number of free White females, number of all other free persons, number of slaves, and sometimes town or district of residence. The categories allowed Congress to determine persons residing in the United States for collection of taxes and the appropriation of seats in the House of Representatives. This first United States census schedules differ in format from later census material, as each enumerator was expected to make his own copies on whatever paper he could find.

An excerpt from the 1850 Madison County census record documents the children of Burrell Jacobs. Amanda Jacobs was 11 years old, which puts her birth date at 1839. Her race is shown as "M", which stands for mulatto. The names and ages of her siblings recorded in the census were added to the Jacobs lineage diagram.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		<u>John Jacobs</u>	13	M	M			
		David "	11	M	M			Alabama
		Isaac "	7	M	M			Ditto
		Amanda "	11	F	M			Ditto
		Mary "	9	F	M			Ditto
		Ruthy "	8	F	M			Ditto
		Nancy "	3	F	M			Ditto
		Silda	1	F	M			Ditto
274	274	<u>Thomas Jacobs</u>	42	M	M	Farmer		North Carolina
		<u>Elizabeth Williams</u>	23	F	M			See census
		Thomas J "	9	M	M			Alabama
		George "	6	M	M			Ditto
275	275	<u>James Cartwright</u>	51	M		Blacksmith		North Carolina
		Mary Jane "	28	F				Alabama
		Martha Ann "	19	F				Ditto
		Elizabeth "	17	F				Ditto

The 1850 Madison County census showing Amanda Jacobs and her siblings.

The question has not been answered about the possible relationship between Pearlie Jacobs and Amanda Jacobs; however, an even more significant issue remains to be resolved—records indicate Burrell Jacobs was a free man prior to the Civil War. Amanda Jacobs was Burrell's daughter, and would be the right age to have been the one who had Jack Horton's children. It would seem that if Burrell were free, then his daughter would have been free. However, in 1979, Ovoy Horton said:

Amanda Horton was purchased as a slave and came to the United States sold to a White slave owner, Jack Horton. Even though slavery had been abolished [by the English?] by the time Amanda completed the journey from North Africa, around Portugal and along the coast of North Carolina, Jack Horton took her anyway. He sat her aside in a little house on 40 acres of land, which was intended for her in the very beginning. This settlement was in the Pond Beat community, which presently houses the Army Missile Command and NASA at Redstone Arsenal. (First Horton Family Reunion, 1979:6, as found in Shogren, Turner, and Perroni 1989). [This researcher questions Amanda being born in Africa.]

Apparently, a Horton descendant also sought to learn more of the relationship between Jack Horton and Amanda Jacobs. Charles Burns is deceased. A folder held in the

Heritage Room of the Madison County Library in Huntsville contains a letter written by Charles Burns to Ranee' Pruitt in the Heritage Room. Burns was born about 90 years ago, so he must have been in his seventies when he wrote the letter in 1993. He had moved to Chicago, where he had inherited the insurance business of his father. His children are there. Rather than explain the interests and thoughts of Charles Burns, the researcher will let his own words speak for him—his letter is presented verbatim below:

**[From Charles Burns to Ranee' Pruitt, Heritage Room, Madison County Library]**

July 8, 1993

*I am writing to you in the hope of enlisting your aid again with the research I have been doing on my family history for the book I am writing.*

*You have been very helpful to me in what I have been able to accomplish so far, but I still have some gaps in my information that I am hoping you will be able to help me clear up.*

*Through the work we have already done we have come to the following conclusions:*

*My great-grandmother, a mulatto woman named Amanda Jacobs Horton had four children: Yancy, Virginia, Celia, and Everett (whom I knew to be my grandfather). These children are listed along with her on an 1870 census report (copy enclosed). Amanda is listed as age 23; the children are ages 8, 6, 4, and 2.*

*While these children are listed here with the surname Jacobs, (Amanda's maiden name) they went by the surname of Horton as adults, and passed the Horton name on to their children.*

*It has long been speculated in my family that these four children were fathered by the White slave owner named Horton to whom Amanda belonged.*

*In searching for information to support this speculation, I found an Appraisal of a George Horton's property taken at the time of his death in 1859 (copy enclosed) that lists among his belongings a girl aged 9. I showed you this when I met with you, and you pointed out that because she was only 9 when George Horton died she could not have borne children for him.*

*However, I now come to suspect that it was not George Horton, but his son, an Andrew Jackson Horton who fathered Amanda's children. And while I may never be able to prove this as an absolute fact, I would like to research Andrew Jackson Horton as thoroughly as I can.*

*Andrew J. Horton aged 31 is listed in the same 1870 census in which Amanda aged 23 and her children appear. He is listed as living in a household with whom I identify as his two younger brothers and his sister. His two older brothers, William H. and James appear on the same census report in a different household. I am able to discern this because their names and ages match with information taken from an 1870 census report (also enclosed).*

*I would like to find whatever else I can on Andrew Jackson Horton, i.e. birth and/or death certificate, property deeds, wills (did he inherit George Horton's property and slaves, and did he deed any property or give his name to Amanda's children) marriage*

*license (did he ever marry, or have legitimate children) and any other valuable information.*

*I would also like any information available on his father George Horton, birth/death certificates, property deeds, etc. Census reports list him as being from North Carolina, if that is so, can it be established when he came to Alabama? And I would also like any information on his other, Andrew J.'s siblings.*

*Amanda's father, Burrill Jacobs is listed on her death certificate and on the 1870 census report as also being from North Carolina; could there be some connection between him and George Horton reaching back to North Carolina?*

*I sincerely hope that you will be able to help me in this research. Your services have been invaluable in helping me to come this far and I am now very anxious to complete this project.*

*I am also writing to Mrs. Addie Shavers to enlist her aid as well.*

*Please contact me at your earliest convenience if you can be of assistance in this matter.*

*Sincerely,*

*Charles W. Burns*

George Horton's will answered some of these questions. Will Book 1, page 206, shows the Last Will and Testament of George Horton, dated "July A.D. 1856." In his will George wrote [Paragraph 1] that it was his "will and desire" that his three older children, George, William, and James, having property of their own, have no further interest in his estate.

In the second paragraph of his will George Horton said it was his "will and desire" that all his just debts be paid, including "what may be due for two Schollarships [sic] in the North Alabama College at Huntsville, should I die before paying for said Schollarships." In the third paragraph George stated it was his "will and desire" that "my Son, Thomas, who is lame shall have the two Schollarships aforesaid and forty shares of Stock of the Memphis and Charleston Rail Road Company, which I now hold, unless I give them to him before I die."

In the fourth paragraph, George Horton bequeathed the balance of his property of every kind to his wife Mary and his children, Andrew [Jackson], Alfred, Thomas, John, Sara, Elizabeth, Mary Ann, Fredrick, and any children born thereafter. This shows that Andrew [Jackson], who has been referred to as "Jack," did inherit from his father; however, the property "of every kind" was divided.

An appraisal of George Horton's property after his death [No. 2221, Probate Court Minute Book No. 6, page 435] provides an extensive list of his property, which includes a Negro girl named Amanda, whose value was listed as \$900.

Whether or not Charles Burns unraveled the history of Amanda and Jack before he passed away is not known. Raneé' Pruitt does not know of any book that he completed. It is reasonable to assume that had he completed his book, he would have provided a copy to the Heritage Room in the Huntsville Public Library. An interview of Charles Burns that appeared decades ago in the *Redstone Rocket* is presented in another section of this manuscript.

The name Burwell Jacobs is found in South Carolina and Alabama across the timeline of three centuries (1790 through the time of sale of land on RSA to the government). Burwell Jacobs owned land prior to the Civil War. As shown on the land deed on the following page, a Burwell Jacobs owned land in Madison County in 1858. Was the Burwell Jacobs shown on the 1858 land deed the same one who was the father of Amanda Jacobs? His name on the 1850 census indicates he was a free Mulatto. Was this the Burwell Jacobs who was the grandfather of Yancy Horton, Sr.? Was Burwell Jacobs a free Mulatto and his daughter a slave because her mother had been a slave?

**HISTORIC FACTS ABOUT FREE BLACKS IN THE 1800'S** (Source: James Benson Sellers, *Slavery in Alabama*, UA Press, 1950):

Children “followed the condition of their mother.” Children born to a free (Black/Mulatto) woman were free, but their freedom had to be proved. Affidavits executed by persons who were reputable citizens and long-time acquaintances of the Negro in question are very common in the court records. In some instances, the head of a free Negro family acted to protect his children, as did John Robinson of Huntsville when, in 1848, he filed papers “for the purpose of providing a permanent means by which his children could be identified and declared, under oath his “own children, born free” [Madison County Deed Book W, July 1, 1848:632]. Such statements were particularly important to free Blacks coming to Alabama from other states.

In Alabama, Acts of the General Assembly (p. 28) passed in 1859-1860 tightened restrictions on emancipated slaves. One declared void all wills which emancipated slaves, including prohibiting the authorization of the removal of slaves from Alabama for the purpose of freeing them. However, in his book, Sellers provides examples of the ways White men who had “mulatto” children and/or faithful servants wrote their wills so as to provide them with a house, land, and the means to live in relative freedom during the duration of their lives; asked for “an act of emancipation as soon as possible;” and, in some cases, included leaving land in trust for them. Sufficient bond was required to see that the provisions of the will were carried out.

An examination of 1860 Alabama census records showed that three of every four free Negroes were mulattos, but mulattos were only one in twelve in the slave population:

**Males:** Black Slaves—201,258, Mulatto Slaves—16,508, Free Mulattos— 962.  
**Females:** Black Slaves—199,492, Mulatto Slaves—17,822, Free Mulattos—1,136.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

E 207.

CERTIFICATE }  
No. 20.011

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Whereas *Burwell Jacobs*, of *Madison County Alabama*.

has deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of THE REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at *Huntsville* whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said *Burwell Jacobs*.

according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for the *South West quarter of the North West quarter, and the North West quarter of the South West quarter of Section Nine, in Township five, of Range one, West, in the District of Lands Subject to Sale at Huntsville, Alabama, containing Eighty one Acres and fifty one hundredths of an Acre.*

according to the official plat of the Survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, which said tract has been purchased by the said *Burwell Jacobs*.

NOW KNOW YE, That the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress in such case made and provided, HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said *Burwell Jacobs*.

and to his heirs, the said tract above described: To have and to hold the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances, of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said

*Burwell Jacobs* and to his heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony Whereof I, *James Buchanan* PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made PATENT, and the SEAL of the GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.

GIVEN under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the *first* day of *March* in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and *fifty eight* and of the INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES the *Eighty second*



BY THE PRESIDENT: *James Buchanan*  
By *J. S. Albright* Secretary.

*J. N. Granger* Recorder of the General Land Office.

[The speculation and sorting of the puzzles of history is at end. The focus returns to the information provided by Alva Jacobs.]

### The Jacobs Family Land as Told by Alva Jacobs

The family trees for Zera and Dock presented earlier will help the reader to sort out the family relationships between the property owners. However, other family information is relevant. Some of the other family land transactions are illustrated from the following page from the General Index to Real Property for Madison County.

TO WHOM MADE				MAKER	KIND OF INSTRUMENT	Where and When Recorded				Location or Other Brief Description		
SURNAME	GIVEN NAMES A B C D E F G H	GIVEN NAMES I J K L M N O	GIVEN NAMES P Q R S T U V W X Y Z			Book	Vol.	Page	Year	Sec.	Tp.	Sq.
Jacobs		Martha J		John A Myrick	al Deed	D	114	199	1916	27	3	1-W
do		Minnie		Wattie Timmons	al Deed	D	114	397	1917	15	5	1-W
do	Burwell			Estill Jacobs	al Deed	D	115	544	1918	Indef		
do	Burwell			Sam H Levy	al Deed	D	116	317	1918	Est of Geo Jacobs		
do	Dock											
do	Frank	James		R L Lytl	al Agmt	Misc	1	259	1919			
do		J C		John Guthrie by Reg	al Deed	D	116	528	1919	14	2	2-W
do	Arthur			Robt E Spragins	al Deed	D	120	255	1919	16	5	1-W
do	Dock									17	5	1-W
do	Frank	James		L C Sugg	al Deed	D	121	50	1919	18	5	1-W

Jacobs family private land transactions (purchases) in Madison County.

Frank Jacobs had, in his own name, a large amount of property. He married Addie, who also had property—so the property shown as owned by Frank and Addie belonged to husband and wife. According to Alva Jacobs, they had no children and were considered “well off” in regard to their economic status.

Frank Jacobs owned the most land. In addition to Parcels D-195 in the vicinity of Horton School, he owned land to the northwest of that area, E-245A on the north side of what is shown as Cedar Hill Church (D-189) and D-168, which, has the Simpson Cemetery in the southeast corner.

The northwest corner of D-168 is bordered by another good-sized parcel owned by James Jacobs. Further to the east, between what is now Redstone Road and Buxton Road, Frank Jacobs owned a small parcel (E-224) and a larger one further to the east, Parcel E-230. He also owned E-245A. Alva said Frank Jacobs had a lot of tenant farmers.

The list below shows the names of Jacobs family members and parcel numbers of the land they owned as listed on the Army Real Estate Map at the time of the sale of the pre-arsenal land to the government. The family lineage diagram provided earlier can be consulted for the kinship ties between the property owners. This list is limited to family members whose last name is Jacobs—relatives with last names other than Jacobs have not been identified.

B-77	Walter Jacobs, ET UX.
C-145	Burrell Jacobs
C-147A	Walter Jacobs, ET UX.
C-147B	Walter Jacobs, ET UX.
C-147C	Walter Jacobs, ET UX.
D-156	James Jacobs
D-168	Frank Jacobs, ET UX.
D-172	Addie Jacobs, ET VIR
D-179	Booker T. Jacobs
D-182A	Arthur Jacobs, ET UX.
D-182B	Arthur Jacobs, ET UX.
D-182C	Arthur Jacobs, ET UX.
D-182D	Arthur Jacobs, ET UX.

D-193	Ernest Jacobs
D-194	Zera Jacobs, ET VIR
D-195	Frank Jacobs, ET UX.
D-197	Addie Jacobs, ET VIR
D-198	Zera Jacobs, ET VIR
D-199	<b>New Cedar Grove Church</b>
E-224	Frank Jacobs
E-230	Frank Jacobs
E-245A	Frank Jacobs
E-245B	<b>Cedar Grove M.E. Church</b>
F-250	Walter Jacobs

**Parcels of land owned by Jacobs family members at the time the land was sold to the government. Jacobs family members who had married and taken other names would not be represented here.**

Alva said that Zera’s father, William, died at a young age. His property went to his wife, Emily. Emily kept the property and divided it between his children, thus Zera, Booker, and Addie acquired their land. Archival records show that the children of William received a bequest from George Jacobs, who died on September 12, 1906. George left his estate to be distributed among a number of heirs. Among them, he listed the children of the deceased William Jacobs, naming Ernest, Edward, Booker, Lula and Zera. William also included “heirs of Ocie Jacobs” in his bequest. They were named as Alvie (age 13) and Booker T.

When the Army bought the land, Alva’s mother Zera owned two parcels, D-194 and D-198. Zera’s land was near Horton School. Off the northwest corner of Zera’s property, Booker T. Jacobs owned parcel D-179, right across the street from Horton School, and it was on that parcel that Alva lived until he was ten years old.

Addie’s property bordered Zera’s to the south, Frank Jacobs had a parcel running along side of theirs on the east side (D-195), Addie had a another parcel in the northeast corner of Frank’s (D-197) and Zera had a small parcel out of the northwest corner of Addie’s (D-198). A small piece cut out of the northeast corner that was probably originally in Parcel D-198 is shown as Parcel D-199, and is shown as New Cedar Grove Church. Alva knew the church but said that was not the name for it that he

remembered. These parcels were all south of the Farley-Triana Road. Furthermore, immediately to the south of Addie's Parcel D-172, Ernest Jacobs owned parcel D-193.

The pictures on the following pages will further acquaint the reader with Dock, Addie and Frank Jacobs. They were the photographs kept by Dock and Zera Jacobs and passed down to their son, Alva.



**Dock Jacobs, World War I.**



**Dock Jacobs and Frank Jacobs working in Frank's blacksmith shop.**



**Addie Jacobs. Taken about 1910. Her husband is shown on the opposite page. Addie was the sister of Zera Jacobs.**



**Frank Jacobs. Taken about 1910. He was the brother of Dock Jacobs.**

# 4-H Activities



In later years, Addie Jacobs presents an award to an outstanding 4-H member.



After having to leave Mullins Flat, Frank Jacobs continued to enjoy harness racing.



**This photo was among those kept by Zera and Dock Jacobs. Their son Alva doesn't remember who the woman was, but the photo is presented because it shows a clothing style of the past and clearly illustrates the construction type of the house behind her.**

## **The Daily Life of Alva Jacobs' Family in the Pond Beat Community**

As a boy, Alva lived across the road from Horton School on Parcel D-179, shown as belonging to Booker T. Jacobs on the RSA Real Estate Map. Alva said his mother traded their property there to her brother, Booker T. Jacobs, for property he owned next to Cedar Grove Church (D-198). Since the parcel (D-198) is so much smaller, it is possible that Zera may have obtained the second parcel she owned, D-194, at the time of this trade. Alva was about ten years old when his mother and Booker T. made the trade.

Alva described the house on D-179. It had two rooms in the front—a bedroom on the left and one on the right. The kitchen was one room attached on the back. The house had a front porch but no back porch.

A smokehouse was in back of the house. Alva described it as a “small framed building,” and said it didn’t have a wood floor. The floor was dirt. The well was in back of the house, as was the hen house. The hen house was constructed of a tin roof and poles. It wasn’t framed.

Alva said when the trade of property was made, and Booker moved into “our house.” The house Zera and her children moved to was similar to the one on the land traded to Booker.

According to Alva, “most of us growing up didn’t have a living room.” They had chairs in the bedroom. Some people, when they got ready to eat, they took some of the chairs to the kitchen. The chairs were usually cane-bottom chairs.

When cane bottoms of chairs wore out, people would repair them. Some people cut and split hickory to make chair bottoms. Alva said:

They cut the hickory and took the bark off. You could peel that wood when it was green. It was flexible then. You cut lines down to take the strips off, and then soaked the strips in water to make them soft. The wood had to be green, which was why you used the outer layer. [Note: According to another source, the wood didn’t necessarily have to be green—some people steamed the wood to make it flexible. Hickory was preferred for its tensile strength.]

People also made their own mattresses. The ticking fabric was bought, and then straw was brought from the hay field. The ticking was sewed, and the mattress filled with straw. Some people made feather tics. The women saved the down feathers when they plucked the chickens, but not the tail feathers or the wings! The down feathers were put in a cloth bag and then in boiling water in a big wash pot to sterilize them. The bag of feathers was hung out for a number of days. This was done in the summer when the weather was nice and hot.

The big wash pot was also used for making lye soap and washing clothes. The rubbing board and the lye soap were necessary to clean clothes.

Alva said most people killed hogs and cured the meat. In the smoke house behind their house, they hung hams, shoulders, the “middlin’” and jowls. Alva defined the middlin’ as being the meat from the center of the back around to the stomach. He said to cure the meat they cut wood chips and put them in to smoke.

Alva’s family didn’t have a refrigerator; they put milk and butter in the spring to keep it cool. Some people would put things in the well bucket to keep cool. They lowered it down to the water. Sometimes they would get ice from town and make ice cream. They made it in a washtub, using milk from the cow. They put in the ice, the salt, and more ice.

There was no electricity. People used kerosene lamps. They cooked on a wood stove. They didn’t use candles. In both Booker and Zera’s houses, a fireplace was between the two rooms in front; it provided heat, opening in each room.

**Grocery Store.** Alva mentioned the grocery store near Horton’s school. He knew Mr. (Arthur) Turner owned it and they went there, but he also said his mother bought things from the “Rolling Store.” Zera sold chickens and eggs to the rolling store when it came around. She traded them for salt, pepper, and sugar. If she had a little left after she traded for those, she got the kids some candy. However, Zera grew vegetables and canned them. Most food was produced at home and not bought.

**Crops.** Alva said they raised cotton and planted corn to feed the stock. The cotton had to be hauled all the way to Huntsville. When asked if he knew of a gin on what is now arsenal land, Alva said there was one in Mullins flat, called Bates gin. Black people took their cotton downtown. [The gin downtown was owned by the Black people—many families had certificates (shares) in it.]

**Selling Turkeys.** Alva’s family raised turkeys and did well selling them at Christmas and Thanksgiving. He said they would load up the wagon and take them downtown. They parked the wagon at Big Springs. Alva and his brother would stay with the wagon while his uncle walked around delivering the turkeys. Then they would go to the town square to a place where they had good hamburgers. “Colored people” went in one door of the restaurant and Whites went in another one. There was a partition between them.

**Stills.** When asked about stills, Alva said he knew people in the neighborhood had them because when the police came and broke them up, he could hear shooting in the woods. One area where he heard this commotion was a wooded area not far from the back of the house where he lived, in the woods that went to the creek that separated Mullins Flat and Pond Beat. [The researcher speculated this was on property owned by Kirby Cartwright, a White landowner who did not live on the land but had sharecroppers.]

**Church.** Zera and Dock and their family went to Cedar Grove Church.

**School.** Alva went to nearby Horton School. He lived by the school yard. He remembers teachers Savoy (female) McCauley and Henry Torrence. Then he went to

A&M. When he went to A&M, he had to stay with some folks down on Franklin Street at first, and then Walter Joiner leased a car and gave him a ride. Alva remembered Mr. Mayberry, an instructor at A&M, getting a bus that took the Black youth to A&M. He said he remembered Walter Joiner driving the bus.

Horton School had a baseball club. Most people couldn't afford uniforms. Sometimes they played against a team from Talucah, across the river [near where Somerville is]. They'd sometimes all have a picnic. They took the ferry back and forth across the river. The ferry they took was a rowboat that held three or four people and cost 25 cents to ride.

**Christmas.** At Christmas time his mother fixed a lot of food, and family members visited. When asked the kinds of Christmas gifts the children received, he said blank [cap] pistols, rubber balls, oranges, nuts, and peppermint sticks. He smiled when he recalled the peppermint sticks, saying they were "big around," and you would take a hammer and crack some off.

Alva said: "When we got old enough not to get hurt, we'd get firecrackers from downtown. That was in our early teens. There were programs at the school and church, as well as box suppers and little carnivals."

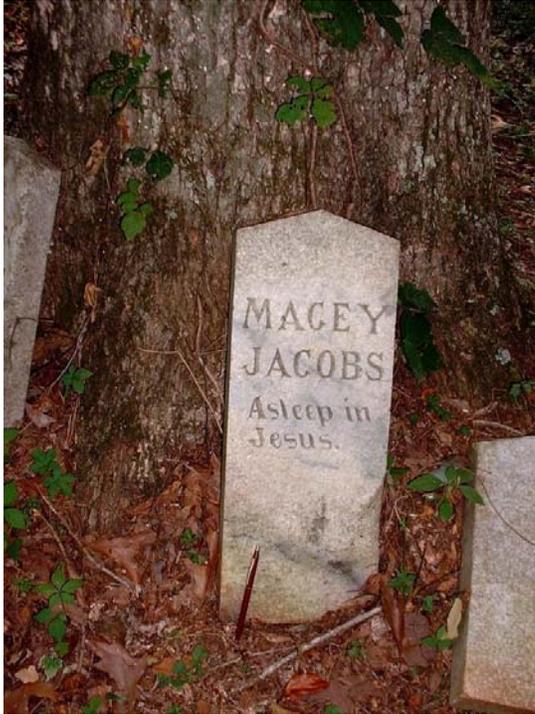
**Toys.** Alva said: "Back then children made their own toys. We'd roll a car tire. We'd make a flip [slingshot]. We shot at birds and at cans. We made Johnny walkers [stilts]. We made carts with tin cans for wheels. They had a straight shaft—axels of wood, tin cans on each side. A cord came up from the wheels up to the handles to steer, a straight piece coming up from the shaft."

**Social Interaction.** Alva said everyone helped each other. Neighbors watched and helped with each other's children. When people got their work done, they would help others. When asked about interaction with White people, he said they didn't have any White neighbors.

**The Mail.** Alva's family lived on the road in from Farley. Alva remembers having a mailbox by the road. It had a box number and they were on Route 4.

**Doctors and Illnesses.** Alva could not remember any prevalent illnesses. However, he did say his sister, Mildred, died when she was only 11 years old in the late 1920's or early 1930s. Mildred had dysentery; she was taken to a doctor in Huntsville, but she died in her mother's arms on the way home. Family doctors were Dr. Scruggs and Dr. New.

**Cemetery.** Many Jacobs family members are buried in what the Army has named the Jordan-Jacobs Cemetery.



**The Jordan-Jacobs Cemetery and markers of Jacobs family members. Photographs by John P. Rankin in 2002.**



### **Elle Jacobs: Horse and Carriage Meet the Electric Trolley**

A story, based on court-house records, told by John P. Rankin:

**One morning in early 1919, Elle Jacobs hitched a horse to a carriage and set off from the farm to Huntsville. Jacobs belonged to a large and prosperous black family living on what is now Redstone Arsenal. Jacobs was just outside the city limits on Clinton Avenue when his carriage met one of Huntsville's electric street trolleys. The horse bolted and pulled the carriage into a wire fence. Jacobs was thrown to the ground, the horse was hurt, and the carriage was damaged. Jacobs sued. Court records show that he asked for \$3000 damages from Alabama Power Company--\$1000 each for the horse, carriage and himself. He did not win. The court found that Jacobs' horse had a reputation for being high-strung. Blame it on the horse, the court decided.**



Jordan - Jacobs Cemetery, Redstone Arsenal, Madison Co., AL, June, 2002.

The only Lucien Jacobs found in the Madison County census records are for a son of Burrell Jacobs. Lucien J. Jacobs was born in August of 1885 to Burrell and his wife Kitty. Burrell was born April, 1855. Kitty was born July, 1860. They were married 20 years at the time of the 1900 census. Burrell was the son of a Burrell Jacobs born in SC in either 1801 or 1810, depending upon which census record is believed. His wife was Elizabeth ("Betsy"), born 1818 in NC.

There was no census record found in Madison County for Lucien Jacobs after the 1900 census. The senior Burrell Jacobs married "Betsy" (Elizabeth) Jacobs in Madison County on Dec. 20, 1846. The junior Burrell Jacobs married Kitty JORDAN on February 1, 1879 in Madison County.

**Jordan-Jacobs  
Cemetery**

Photographs and  
comments by  
John P. Rankin

**The marker of "Mamma" and "Ann"**

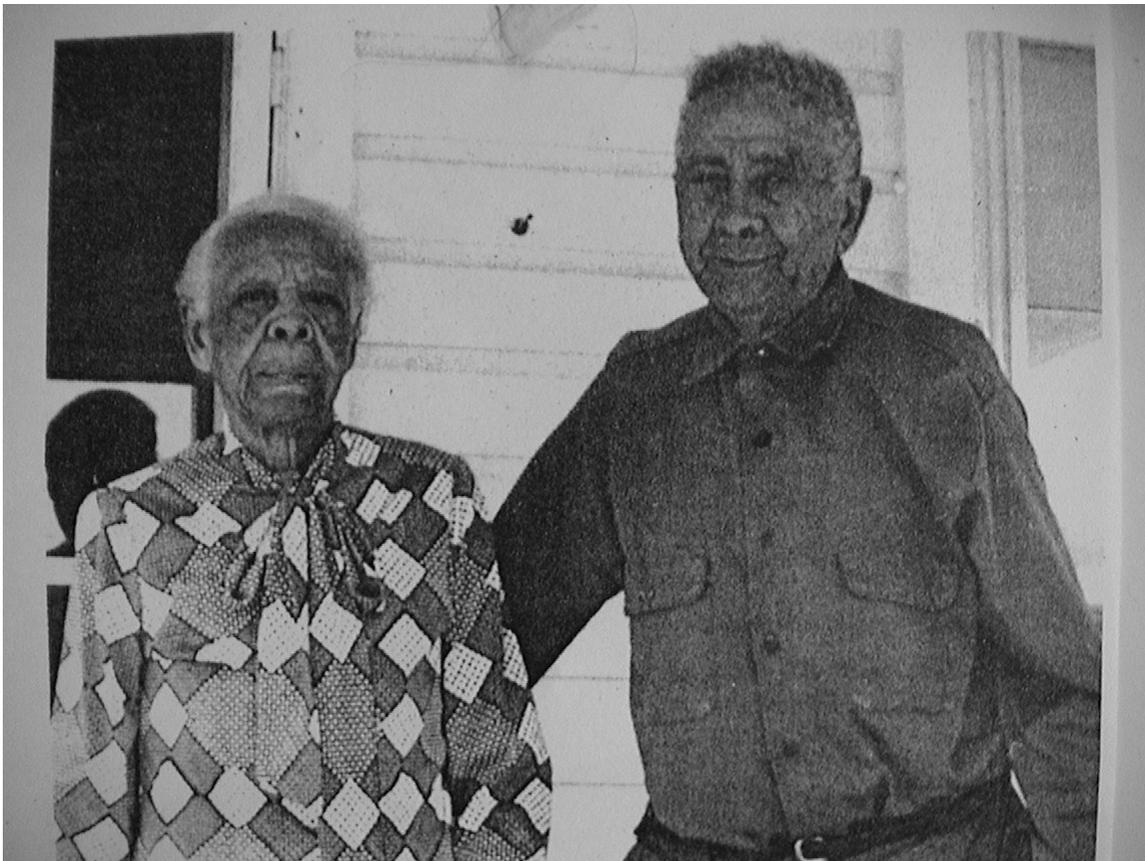
1903  
diE MAY 27  
MAMMA diE  
1919 NoV- 16  
ANN



## Zera and Dock Jacobs Speak for Themselves

In the preceding pages, the author has described the home and lifeways of Alva Jacobs and his parents, Zera and Dock Jacobs, drawn from Alva Jacobs' memories of 60 to 70 years ago. To conclude this section, the memories and opinions of Zera and Dock themselves are presented. They were preserved in an interview conducted twenty-six years ago by Skip Vaughn.

**“Leaving the Arsenal was Sad,” *The Redstone Rocket*, July 2, 1980.**



**Zera and Dock Jacobs in 1980. Source: *The Redstone Rocket*.**

Dock and Alva were married in 1922. Zera was 85 years old and Dock was 88 years old in 1980 when Vaughn conducted the interview. Dock Jacobs was reared in Mullins Flat, which was separated by a creek from Pond Beat where his wife grew up. Dock said, “I was raised there in Mullins Flat, what you call ‘the high place.’” Zera recalled the land that was to become Redstone Arsenal. She said, “It was a big population that lived there” and “both whites and coloreds” owned property.” Zera said they [“the whites and

coloreds”] “got along mighty well. Wasn’t no integration, but they all understood each other.”

Zera Jacobs recalled when she was young there were no schools or hospitals for Black people. The community paid someone to teach its children and schooling would sometimes last a month. [Churches were usually the place for the schooling.]

She recalled that the first mail was delivered by horseback. She said when she was very young (that would have been the late 1800’s and early 1900s), “riders would come from Talucah in Morgan County by ferry boat and deliver their mail here before ferrying back home.” Then, “As time changed we got mail riders in Madison County who began to deliver by car and such like.”

Zera said her family [undoubtedly referring to the parcels in her own name at the time the land was sold] owned 58 ¼ acres of land that was sold to the Army. Zera stated:

The government decided they wanted to put the Arsenal there and we didn’t have any choice but to sell. They set the price—what they wanted to pay for it. We had to accept the price.

She said when the government decided to buy property, “they brought papers for you to sign, then didn’t give you a chance to move out—that’s when they started digging ditches and so forth.” Apparently having questioned whether Zera was angry with the government, Vaughn wrote:

No, we didn’t get angry, she [Zera] said of having to leave the “good” farming [rich] government land. “We just took it as something that had to be done. The whole community went. The whites went and the colored went so all had to go.”

Zera said the army didn’t help them find a new home, but it did “furnish a truck to move furniture out here [location off the arsenal]—That’s all the help we got from them.”

According to Zera, Blacks felt the Army chose here because the land was Black-owned. She said, “Everybody cried when we found out we had to separate. It was sad.” [The extensive ownership of property by Black people in the Pond Beat and Mullins Flat area has been documented in the current 2005 research.]

**Relocation:** Zera and Dock moved with their children to the Moore’s Mill area, where Jacobs family members continue to reside today.

Dock Jacobs continued to farm but also worked for the government during the non-farming months from 1941 to 1942. Dock said, “Me and several others worked in a place making smoke pots.” He also helped mix concrete floors. Then the Army drafted him.

**PEARL LIVINIA HORTON  
HIGGENBOTHAM**

First interview November 17, 1999,  
further contact by phone and visit in 2000.

Pearl Livinia Horton was born on February 18 in 1919. Her father was Yancy Horton Jr. (born in 1887), the son of Yancy Horton Sr. (born in 1861), who was the son of Jack Horton (a White plantation owner) and Amanda Jacobs. Pearl said that both her father and her grandfather were called “Savoy.”

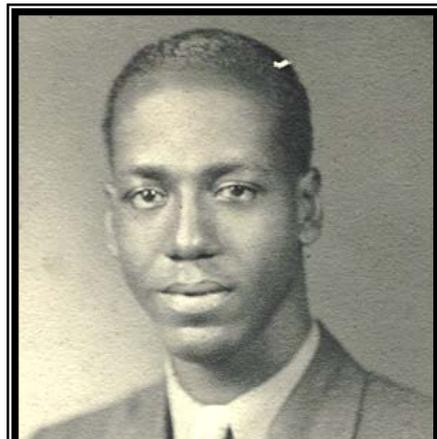
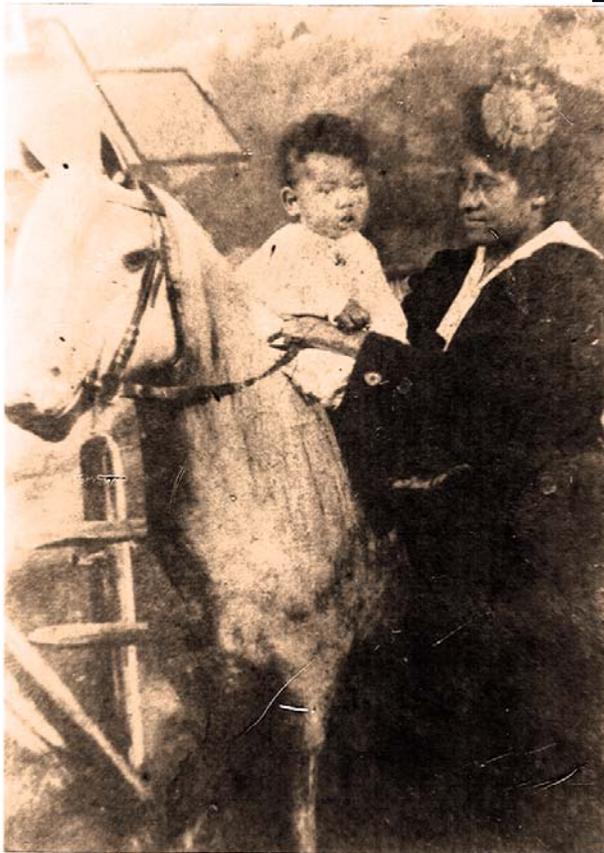
Pearl Horton’s mother (for whom she was named) was Pearl Cowan Horton. Pearl’s father, Yancy (Savoy), Jr. had a son, Archer (Archie) with Kate Weeden prior to marrying Pearl Cowan. Yancy Jr. and Pearl then had seven children.



**Pearl Horton in about 1935.**

Pearl said, “My mother had a racehorse that you raced with the cart around the fairground. His name was Jacktop.”

**Pearl Cowan Horton and her oldest son, Frank Horton, with Jacktop.**



**Archer Horton. He was born in about 1910.**

## Where Pearl Lived

Pearl Higginbotham grew up in Pond Beat. The Hortons owned land in Pond Beat going back to the time of Jack Horton, Pearl's great grandfather who was a White slave owner.



He gave land to each of his children by Amanda Jacobs, whom he emancipated. Pearl's father was born in 1887. The Hortons have owned land in Pond Beat since the time of Jack. Pearl commented that the house they lived in and the land "belonged to Jack Horton." The Army Real Estate Map shows Yancy Horton Sr. as the property owner of Parcel F-264. It seems that Yancy Jr. took his young bride back to the farm where he grew up.

The U.S. census for 1900 shows Yancy Jr. at age 12 living at home with his parents, Yancy and Sophie.

Pearl's sister Ophelia (March 1892-1902).

488	488	Woodward School	Head	W	M	Oct 1858	44	71	18		Alabama	Tennessee	Alabama	
		Betta	Wife	W	F	Sept 1849	50	77	18	2	1	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Uenia	Daughter	W	F	Sept 1892	13	5				Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
487	487	Smith Yancy	Head	M	M	Oct 1854	45	70	28			Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Kate	Wife	B	F	Feb 1864	40	71	25	6	4	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Samuel	Son	B	M	Nov 1880	19	5				Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Austin	Son	B	M	Sept 1889	10	8				Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Anna	Daughter	B	F	Sept 1892	7	5				Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Martha	Daughter	B	F	July 1895	5	5				Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
488	488	Horton Yancy	Head	B	M	Aug 1861	34	71	17			Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Sophie	Wife	B	F	July 1860	40	71	17	3	3	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Grover	Son	B	M	Aug 1884	15	5				Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Yancy Jr	Son	B	M	June 1887	12	5				Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Ophelia	Daughter	B	F	Feb 1892	8	8				Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Turner Fulton	Boarder	B	M	March 1879	21	6				Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
488	488	Dale Aaron	Head	B	M	May 1878	22	71	0			Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
		Mary	Wife	B	F	Sept 1878	21	71	0	0	0	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama
488	488	Fletcher Bill	Head	B	M	Dec 1845	55	71	18			Alabama	Tennessee	Tennessee

1900 Madison County, Alabama Federal Census, E.D. 107, Sheet 21, Whitesburg Precinct 6. OPHIELA

The census of 1900 shows that living with Yancy and Sophie Horton were children Grover (age 15), Yancy Jr. (age 12) and Ophelia (age 8). This indicates Pearl's sister was named after her Aunt Ophelia. A boarder was also listed in the household, Fulton Turner, age 21.

## **Pearl Gives Directions to Places in the Community**

**Starting from Farley.** Pearl gave directions to her father's home from what is now South Memorial Parkway. At Farley, turn west on what is shown on the Army Real Estate Map as the Whitesburg-Triana Road. Old county maps show this road as having the name the Farley-Triana Road, and that is the name remembered by the people. Pearl said from the Farley-Triana Road Timmons Lane drops to the southwest where it joins with the road to the river (shown as Green Grove Road). None of the people who lived in this area remembered the road having that name. They simply referred to it as "the road down to the river." Pearl added, "If you were coming from my house, you went up the road (north) and the store was at the "Y" in the road.

Today, one can follow Pearl's directions to her home. Coming in from Farley on Buxton Road, the location of Horton School is on the left (Parcel F- 265). The old roadbed is visible on the south side of Buxton Road. Continuing further, to where McAlpine Road intersects with Buxton, the community store was on the north side of Buxton at the intersection.

**The School.** Continuing the description of her route walking home, Pearl said in going to her home from Farley, she would pass the Horton School, which was named after her grandfather who gave the land for it in the year she was born (1919).

**The Store.** Pearl said the people in Pond Beat had their own store and filling station. She said, "Coming in from Farley, after you passed Horton School, you would come to the store." The store always had the main food supplies, such as flour and sugar. Pearl said that Charles Woodward owned the store and then sold it to his brother Lee Woodward. The Woodwards were White people.

The store, located on Parcel C-174, was owned by A.C. Turner. Pearl remembers the storeowners from when she was a girl, when "the Woodwards owned the store." The ownership of property was usually associated with the man of the family. In a later interview with Edith Woodward Price, she said that the store had been owned by her mother, Ruby Eslick (see Edith Woodward interview). A description of the store and house on that property is found in the interview of Alton Gene Neal. Neal was raised by his grandfather, A.C. Turner, the last owner of the store.

**The Gas Station.** Pearl commented that even though the community store had a filling station [the gas pumps were at the store.], her father didn't use it. Pearl said that Yancy Horton and Frank Jacobs "had a gas station" [pumps] where they would fill up their tractors. What they had was a tank of gas. " Later on," Pearl said, the Hortons got a refrigerator that ran on gasoline.

**Where Pearl Grew Up.** Going straight down McAlpine Road, the property where Pearl grew up is on the east side of the road, shown as F-264, the large piece listed as owned by Yancy Horton Sr. The description of the Yancy Horton, Sr. home is presented below.

## **Yancy Horton's Home**

Pearl was asked to describe her grandfather's home. She said: "[It] was very well built, [a] colonial house with a porch around the front." Asked about the material of the outside of the house, Pearl said "planks." The house was made out of wood. Pearl said:

The house had six rooms. It had a dining room. It had a fence around it. You would come in through the fence from the well. The front steps up to the porch were brick. The porch was covered. In the back, you would walk up three steps and then come to the kitchen and then the dining room. The kitchen was at the end of the hall. When you first walked into the house, you would enter the hallway. You had three doors to this house, and it had three bedrooms. The fourth room was kept for company and was for entertaining. There was one closet in each bedroom. The floors were hard wood floors, except in the kitchen and dining room there was linoleum. [Location of the doors?] There was a porch on the front and around the side and one on the back that opened into the dining room.

Pearl said their house had "Delco" lights that went out to the barn from the house. The lights were on a post out in the yard. In the house they had [oil] lamps. They had a well with a wooden pump that also had a pipe that ran from the well to the barnyard to water the horses and cows.

In saying that her grandfather's home was made of wood, Pearl noted that the only brick house around was Frank Jacob's second house, the one he built after his first one burned. She said Frank Jacobs lived across the road from her family. A road divided the Horton land from his.

## **Further South toward the River**

Yancy Horton also is shown as owning a smaller piece of property to the southeast, closer to the river, bordering land bought by I. Schiffman & Co. Inc. Pearl said a gravel road divided Yancy Horton's land from Schiffman land. Schiffman, she noted, had all Black tenants. She said you go "up the hill to the Mt. Olive Baptist Church, and then go straight down to the river." Parcel F-264 fits a description given by Pearl: "[You] went on through the community facing the Tennessee River [Pond Beat], and he [her father] had land in what was called "the Low Place" right on the Tennessee River." Her father used it for raising cotton and corn.

Pearl said the Watkins Family used to live in the "Low Place." A number of tenant families lived down there." It was considered part of Pond Beat. Pearl said Jim Watkins lost the land to Yancy Horton Sr. Ella Watkins also lived down there. She had two boys and one girl, named Mattie. One of the boys was named Donzell. "The Low Place was large enough to support a family with each member having their own patch." Pearl said that many landowners were required to sell land they owned by the river in 1935 to the TVA.

## Their Cemetery and the Church



**Richard Joiner (1878-1906),  
Horton-Joiner Cemetery.  
Photo by John P. Rankin,  
2002.**

**The Cemetery.** Pearl stated, “Our cemetery was mostly on Frank Jacobs’ side, but it was at the end of the road by Horton School [F-265].” In looking at the Army Real Estate Map, we see the cemetery is located exactly where Pearl said.

On the map, it seems to have been along the east boundary of the property of Yancy Horton [F-264], by the property line between his and Earnest Jacobs’ property [D-193] and also the

Addie Jacobs property (D-72). Today, this is the area between RSA Bldg. 8713 and Bldg. 8714.



**Ophelia Horton (1915-1925),  
Horton-Joiner Cemetery.  
Photo by John P. Rankin,  
2002.**

Pearl said Frank Jacobs, Earnest Jacobs (Frank’s brother), and Addie Jacobs were buried in Huntsville. However, Etta Jacobs, Alva Jacobs, and Beck Jacobs were buried in the Community Cemetery [Horton-Joiner Cemetery]. Beck was the mother of Frank Jacobs, who was Yancy Horton’s neighbor.

Two monuments have legible inscriptions. The inscription of Ophelia Horton states she is the daughter of Sophie Horton and she died at age 10, and it states that the monument was erected in 1925. The 1900 Madison County census shows an Ophelia, daughter of Sophie Horton as born in 1892, so if this is the correct Sophie, she would have died in 1902 and the monument was erected later.

The inscription on the monument for Richard Joiner states he was born Dec. 18, 1878 and died March 12, 1906. He was the son of Felix and Millie Joiner. Based on the names on the monuments, the cemetery was named Horton-Joiner Cemetery by the Army. Joiner, a Horton “in-law,” may have been the only Joiner buried there.

Pearl remembered some of those who were interred in the cemetery: “One grandchild, Lankford Horton. He was 9 months old. Sophie Horton, Maria Jacobs, Earnest and Maria Russell, Piccula Robertson, John Grimes. Maybe Alva Jacobs. Maybe Beck Jacobs, Frank Jacobs’ mother, and maybe Pearlene Lacy [male].” She said the graves “mostly had markers that were I.D. cards with name and birth date that were covered in plastic.”

**The Church.** Pearl commented that the old Cedar Grove Church in Pond Beat was near the Community Cemetery. It was on a hilltop with a lot of Cedar trees on top, which was how the church got its name. The Cemetery was called the Community Cemetery because people who were buried there didn’t necessarily go to that church.

### **Where the Cowan Family Lived**

Pearl’s grandfather, Andy Cowan, owned Parcel B-82 on the south side of Huntsville-Triana Road.

Pearl said, “Tim Williams [J. T. Williams (B-83)] had a family [that lived on his property] by the name of Gladys (?), and then Papa had some people that lived over there on his farm.” She also commented, “The Penlands were a large family. Pappa [Grandfather] used to buy fish from them.”

Pearl said, “There was another farm across from Papa’s—Ellie Toney on that side.” Pearl spoke of Jeanetta Toney, a friend of her mother. Harris Toney was the father of Jeanetta and Ellie. Ellie (male) and Kittie Toney had two boys (Herbert and James) and two girls. Ellie Toney owned various pieces of land bordering Andy Cowan to the east, west, and south (Parcels B-98, B-81, B-85, and B-86). Pearl said their farm and her grandfather’s were “joined by a fence.”

### **Cowan Family Cemetery**

Pearl said her family’s cemetery was on her Papa’s land (grandfather, Andy Cowan). The Army named the cemetery after the landowner of the parcel (B-82, Andy Cowan) at the time of sale. Pearl said Cowan Cemetery was a “right name” for it.

According to Pearl, her grandmother is buried in the cemetery, but Andy Cowan himself was buried in Huntsville. He lived to be 104 years old. She said Yancy Horton Sr. was older than that when he died because he died sometime after Andy Cowan. Yancy Sr. and Andy Cowan were both buried in Glenwood Cemetery. Her comparison of her grandfather and Yancy Horton Sr. indicates they were contemporaries. Yancy Horton Sr. was born in 1861, which would put him at age 19 in 1880. The 1880 Madison County census shows Andrew Cowan as age 25, so Yancy Horton Sr. was actually a few years younger than he.

Pearl said Budd Cowan might be buried in Cowan Cemetery. He was around 50 or 60 years old when he died. He was Oscar's son. "There could be 27 people buried there, but they are not all Cowans." The researcher remembered George Jones (1889-1931) being shown on RSA records as buried in the Cowan Cemetery, thus, Pearl was asked if she recalled the Joneses. She replied, "I don't recall anybody named George Jones, but people would let others in the community be buried in their cemetery."

Pearl did not recognize the other names the Army records had listed for Cowan Cemetery, which were Mem Turner, Margaret Robinson 1941, Bertha J. Bones, 1932, Frank C...(?) 1937, and Jas. Lehman 1935. However, the Army Real Estate Map shows Myrtle Turner as owner of a small piece of land that bordered Andy Cowan on the northwest, just above Ellie Toney. Mem Turner may have been associated with it.



**Amanda Lightford, Celia Jones, and Magnolia Baker Lankford.**

The women pictured above were friends of Pearl Higginbotham. Amanda Francis Kelly Lightford was the granddaughter of Amanda Jacobs Sheffield. Amanda married John Sheffield after she had children by Jack Horton (the plantation master). Magnolia Baker Lankford (born in 1902) was Emma Lankford Horton's mother. The next section presents the interview of Emma Lankford Horton.

## **EMMA LANKFORD HORTON**

(Wife of Ovoy)

Interviews March 2001, and May, June and July 2005 by telephone

### **The Lankford Family**

Emma's father was Ernest Lankford (April 8, 1902-Sept. 14, 1956). Her mother was Magnolia Baker Lankford (August 23, 1902). Her father's mother was Emma Simpson Slaughter. She was in her late forties when she died in 1926.

Emma's maternal grandmother was Agnes McVay Baker. She was about 98 or 99 years old when she passed away in the 1960's. Emma's maternal grandfather was John Baker. Agnes and John Baker separated before Emma was born. After they separated, Agnes had several other children, who had the name Baker. They were: Thurston, Andrew, Pitman, and Samuel. Then Agnes went back to the name McVay.



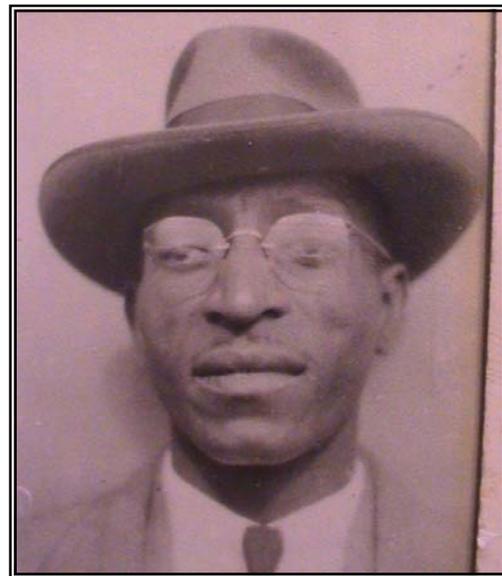
**Emma Lankford Horton, born June 24, 1920.**

Emma married Ovoy Horton. The children of Emma and Ovoy are: Ovoy, Ernest, Geraldine (Taylor), Annie, and Sharon (Steel). First, the information learned from Emma Horton about her family and her life before marriage to Ovoy is presented. Then Emma's insight and knowledge of her husband's family will be presented and lead into discussion and interviews with other Horton family members.

### **Where They Lived**

Emma said, "We lived in Mullins Flat. My Daddy [Ernest Lankford] had his own stock. He had his own horses and tools." Emma said when she was older, her father had a crop on land he rented from Anderson (Parcel C-138). The difference was a sharecropper gave up more of his crop to the landowner. Emma said as a renter, "He did 3rds and 4ths, which meant he got three out of every four." The land was in Dixon's Lot near Horton Ford.

When asked how her father managed to buy the stock and tools, Emma said everything was done on credit, even buying land.



Horton's Ford was a place on Horton property where people forded what is currently known as Huntsville Spring Branch. Dixon's Lot was an area in Mullins Flat. Emma said that had been a long time ago, and she couldn't remember why Dixon's Lot was called that or whether it encompassed more land than the Anderson property (C-198), but she was definite that the Anderson land was in the Dixon's Lot community.

Emma said the property "wasn't too far" from where Felix Lanier lived. They rented a four-room house from Darphus Love (Mary McCrary [his widow], C-132). Darphus Love's first name was Adolphus, but he was called and is remembered as Darphus. Emma drew a simple diagram showing a road by Fennell Cemetery (C-106), saying as a girl she went south on the road by Fennell Cemetery, down past the Missionary Baptist Church (C-123)\*, and past Vertie Ward's place. She said Vertie Ward had 40 acres. They were south and east of church (C-126-A). The church is "cut out of" the southwest corner of the parcel owned by Ed Lankford. Emma said that they didn't live too far from Felix Lanier. According to Felix Lanier (interview), he lived on Milton H. Lanier's (prominent White land owner) land (C-146), which bordered Darphus Love's land on the southeast corner of his property C-132). Emma said she didn't remember the house she lived in that well. When asked if it had a root cellar, she said no.

**[\*Note: C-123, shown on some maps as "Trs.—Center Grove Church Colored" was identified by Emma Lankford Horton and James Love (son of Moses Love, parcel C-131) as being the Pine Grove Missionary Baptist Church.]**

### **Daily Life and the Community**

**Church.** Emma's mother was a Baptist and her father was a Methodist, so they would go to the Baptist Church every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday and to the Methodist Church the other two Sundays of the month. The Methodist Church they attended was the Center Grove Methodist Church (B-71). It was also called the Grange (meetings were held there).

A Baptist Church near the Center Grove Methodist Church was where Rev. Hezekiah Lanier preached. It was a "Hardshare" Baptist Church. She said the Hardshare Baptists did things like foot washing—and they would stay at the church all day, singing, preaching, and eating their meal there. Since the researcher had heard the term "Hardshell" Baptist but not "Hardshare," she asked Emma to repeat the word and verified that word Emma was using was "Hardshare." [Hezekiah Lanier's grandson (Rev. McKinley Jones) later confirmed this term.]

When asked to describe the churches she attended, Emma said they were both about the same, and reminded the researcher that she was trying to remember back over 65 years ago. She said the churches were "alike." "Both had one large room and two or three windows on each side. You had to have windows for light and to let the air in."

Pews were on each side and down the middle, separated by aisles. Emma said the pews were like benches with backs, with "about three boards to make up the seat and about

three boards to make the back.” Emma couldn’t remember for sure how many rows of pews there were, “maybe ten.” When she was a little girl, about 6 or 7 years old, kerosene lamps were used to light the churches. The lanterns were hung along the walls. When she got older, the churches got battery [Delco] lights.

**Silverhill School.** The first school Emma went to was Silverhill School (C-132). Teachers she remembered were Ruby Briggs, Professor Jamar, and Mattie Duncan. Emma said:

There was no age limit for primer class. You’d go when you could go. My father would carry us in a wagon, or in a buggy when the weather was bad. If the weather was too bad, we didn’t go. I was born in 1920 so I went to school in about 1926. It was a one-room school, maybe about 40 or 50 students when everybody was there. There were schools in churches also. Those I remember were Annie Pearl Jacobs, Gladys Lacy (1930-1935), Walter [?], Mae Barley, the Braggs family (Luepatra and Ida), and the Ward girls (Jesse, Bertha, Matilda, and Burney). There was Mildred Horton (Wiggins), James Horton, Walter Mae Barley (older than me), and Felix Lanier (older than me). James Love went to school with me, too.

When the researcher mentioned she had visited James Love (the son of Moses Love), Emma said she hadn’t thought about him in years and would call him to say hello.

Children went to the outhouse during recess: “That was the only time we got to go, so we went.” The girls’ outhouse had two seats and a hole dug deep in the ground. Emma said:

When we had our lessons caught up, the teacher would let some of us go for water. We liked to go for water to get a little break. We’d take our buckets. We used to go down in the spring and come up some steps. We’d go down in the ground. That was on the Moses Love farm (C-131). We’d go down ten rock steps. They said Indians built them. We’d go down the road and cut across the path. It wasn’t far. It would take 20 to 30 minutes for us to go get the water. It wasn’t too far because the teacher wouldn’t allow us to go too far. Darphus Love (C-132) lived across the road in the other direction. Darphus had a cistern and a pump. Darphus’ wife was a cousin of Ovoy Horton.

**After School.** Emma and her friends sometimes went to Mary Love’s home. It was not far from the school. Mary was married to a Lightford, but they lived on her Daddy’s land. Her daddy was Moses Love (C-131), whose land bordered the school to the north. Moses Love and Darphus Love were brothers. Emma said:

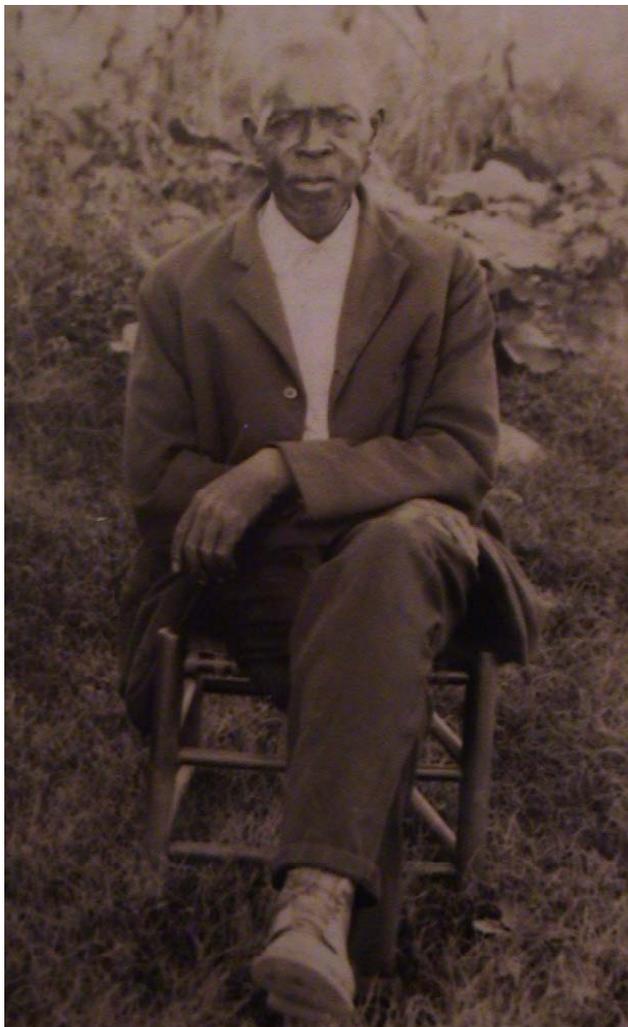
We used to go to Mary’s house and she’d play records for us. Mary had a Victrola that you cranked by hand. Three or four of us girls would go. We’d take turns. She’d play records--Marion Anderson used to sing. One song was “If you see my milk cow, please drive her home.” It was a Blues

song. We were big girls then. While we were there, sometimes we'd go down to the spring and get buckets of water for her.

**The Store.** Darphus Love had the only store (C-126B) in the area, and it had some of everything. The only time Emma went in the store was when she was at school—the store was right next to the school, and she would go in the store to buy candy. Sometimes peddlers came through. She remembers the “rolling store,” which is what people first called the wagon and then the truck that a peddler would drive around the rural areas.

Emma said her father would go to town on weekends and sometimes during the week. Occasionally, the children got to go. Emma commented that the family grew their own vegetables, raised hogs and cows, and the men hunted squirrels, rabbits, possums, and coons, and fished, so not many groceries were store-bought. She said: “We went to T. T. Terry’s, which had dry goods, groceries, farm stuff. It had everything. Fowler and Chaney was another store we went to, but it had dry goods, not food.”

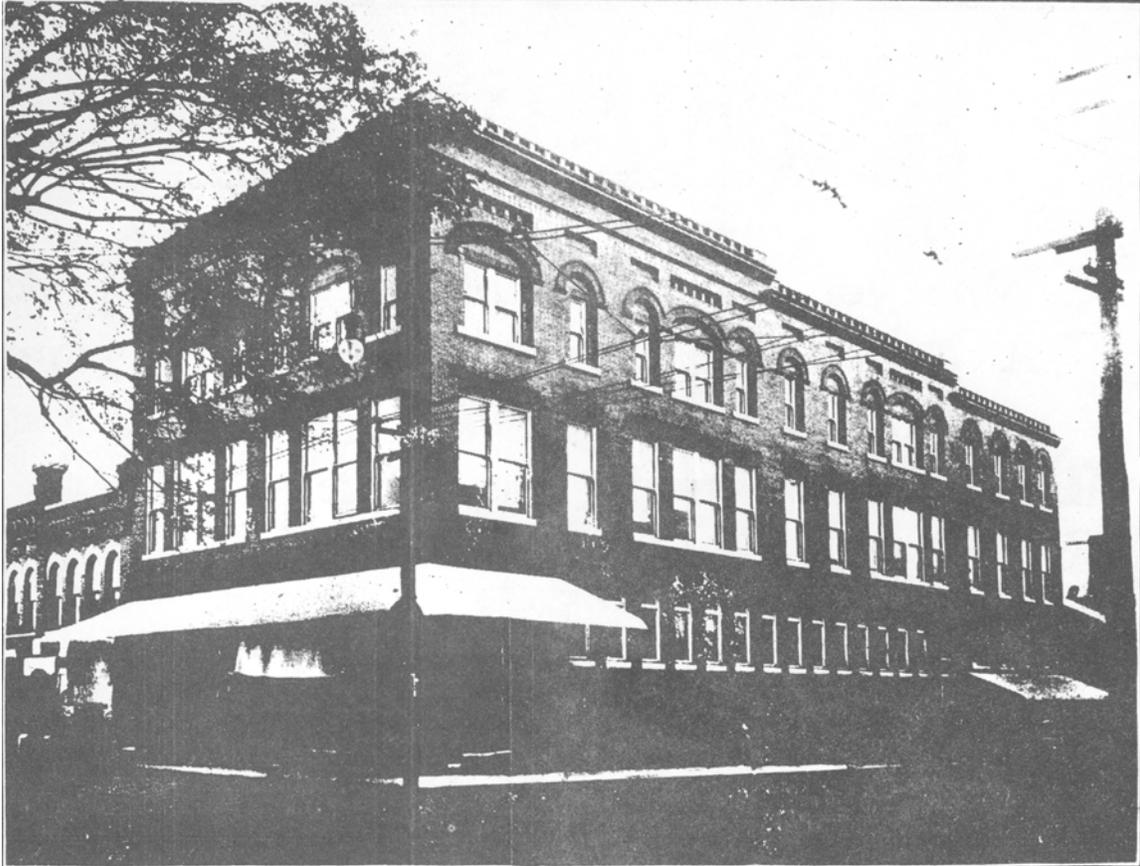
**Subsistence.** Emma commented, “Everybody raised cotton and corn. Some people raised tobacco, but we didn’t. Some of the bigger farms did. Aside from the crops, we grew the food we ate: green beans, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, collards, turnips, butterbeans, black-eyed-peas, and crowder peas. I remember we’d plant a field of peas. We’d pick the peas then cut it afterwards for livestock feed.”



**Will Baker from Pond Beat. Emma’s maternal uncle, brother of Laura Baker Lankford. Photo era 1920’s.**

Emma’s father took the cotton to Huntsville to be ginned. He raised sugar cane also. She didn’t know where he took it to be milled, but it wasn’t as far as Huntsville. Thinking of Huntsville, Emma said:

“When we were going to shop, we’d go to Huntsville. We’d go to T.T. Terry’s for food and clothing. To get there we’d come through Merrimack. We carried our corn there to be ground.”



**The Terry Brothers Company Department Store in Huntsville. (Source: Business Men's League of Alabama 1908). This is where Emma Lankford and others from the pre-arsenal communities came to shop.**

In discussing the foods, Emma said:

When I was a girl, my parents raised chickens, pigs, and cows. Some people had goats. The peddlers came through, and we’d sell eggs to them. Sometimes we’d sell chickens. Many people did this—traded them for other things.

Most people had hams and pork, and some people had turkeys. A peddler went around selling beef in the wintertime, an old man named Troddler. That was 75 years ago.

**Tasks Women Did.** Emma said her mother cooked, canned, washed the clothes, made soap, sewed, and traded the eggs to the peddler. Women worked in the garden. Most women worked in the fields. Girls learned to do everything.

I remember when mother fastened the beans [pinto] over the fireplace. That was in the 1930's. We had a little rack built under the chimney. We had a wood stove with a wide tank on each side to heat water. It was a step stove. The apron where you made fire was at the bottom. The top was like a step. It had four eyes and was about a yard tall. The stove was up on little legs. The upper step was where the eyes were. In between was a little door where you put the food.

Mattresses and pillows were made by the women. Emma emphasized that when she and her husband got married, they *bought* a mattress. That was in 1938. In earlier years, the mattresses were made of straw. It is reasonable to assume that some women still made mattresses for their family in 1938, especially since Emma emphasized that she and her husband bought theirs.

Emma explained that her mother got bales of straw from a store in Huntsville to make the mattresses. Some people just went out and got "grass" from the field. Asked if she meant hay when she said "grass," Emma said yes.

The bales of straw that were bought were different from the grass pulled from the field. The kind they bought lasted longer and didn't break up as fast. [Note: Straw is made of grain stems, oats, and wheat.]

Feathers were saved for making pillows, not all the feathers, just the soft ones. Later, pillows were made of cotton.

Feed or fertilizer bags were sewed up to make ticks for the pillows and mattresses. Some people bought material from the store in Huntsville.

At one point of time, "sometime in the 1930's," a woman came "from a program" and met with the women of the communities in the churches. The woman from the program taught them how to make mattresses and pillows using cotton to stuff them.

**Garbage.** When asked what they did with garbage, Emma said she did not remember having a lot. Once in a while, people hauled it off to dump somewhere. She didn't know where they dumped it. When asked if people burned garbage, Emma said that people would "burn some." She said, "Sometimes you'd see a fire off somewhere and you'd know somebody was burning garbage." When asked about tin cans, Emma said they didn't buy much that came in cans. The food she could remember buying in cans was sardines and salmon. Salmon was used for making salmon patties.

**The Out House.** When asked if trash or other refuse was ever dumped into the outhouse, Emma's answer was "No." In regard to outhouses, Emma said:

In the 1930's the WPA dug a hole and built a seat up over them. Not many people had them. Most people dug a hole and had a wood board seat. Sometimes when we were young, we'd just go out in the bushes.

After we left the arsenal and moved to town it [the outhouse] was built off the back porch. You had to walk from the porch. There was a tank up on the wall, some kind of tin or something. When you'd get up and pull the chain down, it would flush. It had a pull chain. That was in the 1940's.

**Electricity.** Emma didn't remember anyone having electricity. She said:

Few people had electricity. A few people, like the Jacobs, had Delco battery lights. I knew a couple families who was living well—Walter Jacobs and Sam Harris. We used kerosene lamps. [Did you use candles?] We didn't use candles. When do you think we lived? That was before our time.

**Home Remedies:** Emma said she couldn't remember home remedies, but then mentioned Asafetida, which was bought at the drug store and taken "for indigestion, colic and upset stomach." She said, "You'd put it in water and let it dissolve and then take a drink of it." Kerosene was put on a bite or a sting.

**Doctors and Illnesses.** Emma said:

I used to hear Dad talk about malaria. It came through and killed a lot of people. They didn't have medicine for it. He said Scarlet Fever killed a lot of people.

I remember the doctor back when it was Dr. Scruggs. I recall him coming to mother when she was ill when I was 6 or 7 years old. He was old then. He came in his horse and buggy. He came so far and then he'd have to walk the rest of the way to the house.

If we needed a doctor, we'd go to Huntsville and get one. My youngest brother, Walter Lee, died at age 11 from appendicitis. We didn't know what it was. We took him to the doctor. [Was the doctor Black or White?] The doctor was White. The first doctor was Black. He was new [possibly Dr. New]. We took my brother to him—he got worse. When my brother got real bad off, his appendix ruptured, then we took him to the hospital. The doctor there was White. It was July of 1938. My brother died. I was about 18 then.

A lot of people had midwives when their babies were born. I had a midwife with my first one and the second. I said I'd never have another midwife, and I didn't. I had seven children. There was a time when midwives was all you had. Dr. Walker delivered the rest of mine at home.

When asked about the dentist, Emma said you could go to the dentist and have a tooth ground and filled; however, "sometimes they got bad and people just got them pulled."

**The Funeral Home.** Most people used Royal Funeral Home. Emma knew of some instances when the body was brought home for the wake. This was not a topic Emma wished to pursue at length.

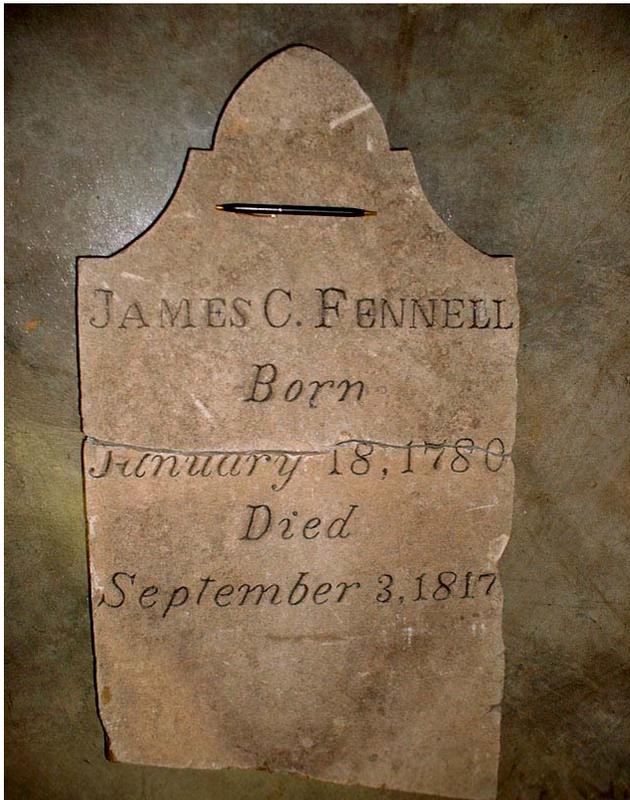
**Fennell Cemetery.** Emma's mother, her Aunt Maggie Simpson, and her brother, Walter Lee Lankford, are buried in Fennell Cemetery.



**Left:** The stone of Mary Lightford (1883-1932). **Right:** A view of Fennell Cemetery.

Photographs by John P. Rankin

*Those who came before*



**Tombstone of James C. Fennell, thought to be the oldest in Madison County.**

The Fennell Cemetery was in use many years prior to Emma's family burying people there. The name Fennell came from a White plantation owner. The Fennell family dates back to the early settlers of Huntsville. The tombstone of James C. Fennell, born January 18, 1780 and died September 3, 1817, is thought to be the earliest tombstone in Madison County, and only avid historic researchers will discover it. It is held by the Madison County Library in Huntsville.

The Beasley marker in the Fennell Cemetery goes back in time beyond the Lankfords and Hortons who are being discussed. The photo on the next page and Rankin's comments are a window to the past.

Marker of Joseph Beasley. Photograph and comments by John P. Rankin.



### Fennil Cemetery, Redstone Arsenal, Madison Co., AL, June, 2002.

In his personal input to the book "SLAVE GENEALOGY" by Thomas Henry Kenny, James Beasley stated on Nov. 13, 1869 that he was 26 years old. He further stated that he had served in the recent war in Company C, 12th regiment of the U.S. Colored Infantry. In 1869 he was a farmer on Matt Strong's plantation.

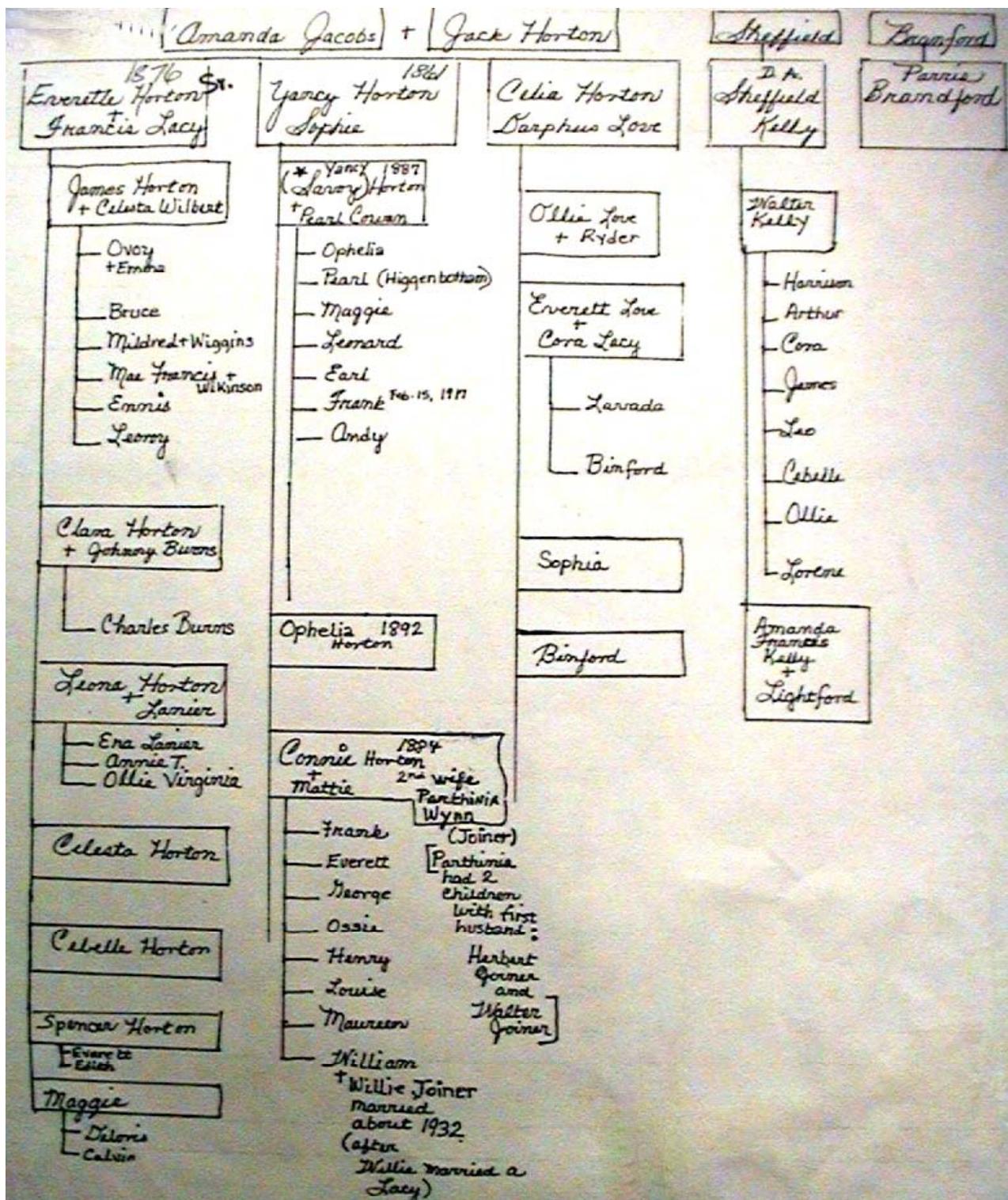
James Beasley further stated that his father was Bill Beasley, his mother was Maria Beasley, and his wife was Emmaline Beasley. He mentioned no children, but he said that he had a brother Elick Beasley (there was a "Nick" Beasley who served also in the USCI) and four sisters.

The sisters were named Mary Ann, Emma, Lucinda, and Becky.

The 1880 AL census has James Beasley (white), age 63, born in Virginia, as head of a household in Enumeration District 200, page 53A. His wife was Harriet (55 AL), and they had 3 daughters and 2 sons in the household. The household also included Mulattos Lizzie Mastin (married, 60, AL), Francis Mastin (single, 12, AL), and WILLIAM BEASLEY (married, 60, VA).

The 1880 AL census of Lauderdale County has the only Maria Beasley listed as head of household. [She was not found in a scan of the Madison County census records of 1880.] The Maria in Lauderdale Co. AL was shown as age 57, b. VA. She was listed with 3 sons: Edward (18, b. VA), Moses (16, b. AL), and William (14, AL). While Maria of Lauderdale Co. was the right age and name to be the mother of Corporal Joseph Beasley, she was listed as a WIDOW, whereas it appears that Joseph's father William ("Bill") was still living in Madison Co. in the household of James Beasley, the plantation owner. Furthermore, Maria's sons gave conflicting information about their parents. Edward's parents were listed as father born in VA and mother born in VA, agreeing with data for Maria. However, Moses' father was listed as born in VA and mother in AL, and William's father was listed as born in AL and mother in AL. All of these children were born late enough to not yet be born when Joseph listed his brothers in 1869 in the book "SLAVE GENEALOGY".

Probate Records of Madison County, Alabama, show that Joseph Beasley died February 15, 1918. His brother Thomas became Administrator of the small estate.



**The Horton Family Chart.** The descendants of Amanda and Andrew Jackson "Jack" Horton. After having children by Jack Horton, Amanda later married. Her first husband was named John Sheffield, and the second was Bransford. Her son Paris had three children, Word, Irene and Newman. Irene's children were Wyatt, Noah, Ulysses, Juanita, Charlie, Lawrence, and Marie. Newman's children were Paris and Cassie. NOTE: Everett Horton stated in a document that his grandfather was Burwell Jacobs who died in about 1890 (see page 219).

## THE HORTON FAMILY

### Emma Lankford Married Ovoy Horton

Emma Lankford married Ovoy Horton in her father's home on Adolphus [Darphus] Love's land. She didn't get married in a church because she wanted a small, private wedding, but so many friends and family came that they couldn't fit in the house. The officiating minister was Reverend W.P. Pallard from the Center Grove United Methodist Church (it was called the Grange before it became associated with the United Methodist Conference). It was located along what is now Martin Road on Parcel B-71. Everyone "dressed up pretty" for the wedding, and cake and ice cream were served to the guests.

**Francis Horton's House.** Mrs. Emma Horton described her husband's grandmother's [Francis] house (C-140). It had a hall down the middle and a bedroom on each side (four rooms), and a dormer on the roof. "Like almost all houses, it had porches." Darphus Love also had a house like this. It was a big house. Emma stated, "Mama Francis was doing real well." Francis is shown in the group photograph. The year it was taken is not known, but Francis and Everett were probably born prior to the end of the Civil War.

**Horton Family--Overview.** Emma Horton helped to draw a family tree for her husband. The researcher added to it as information was acquired. An overview of the roots of the Hortons is presented here: Ovoy Horton, born in 1917, was the son of Celesta Wilbert Horton and James Horton, who was the son of Everett Horton and Francis Lacy Horton. Emma said the mother of Francis was a Timmons. Everett's siblings were Yancy Horton Sr. [who died sometime in the 1930's at age 78], Celia Horton [who married Adolphus (Darphus) Love], and Virginia Horton. Yancy Horton Sr.'s parents were Jack Horton (who was a White man) and Amanda Jacobs (Jack's servant).

### The 1880 U.S. Census: Madison County, Alabama, showing Amanda Sheffield.

Census Place: Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 135D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>John SHEFFIELD</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>MU</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>AL</b>
Amanda SHEFFIELD	Wife	F	M	MU	39	AL
Yancy HORTON	SSon	M	S	MU	19	AL
Virginia HORTON	SDau	F	S	MU	15	AL
Celia HORTON	SDau	F	S	MU	13	AL
Everett HORTON	SSon	M	S	MU	12	AL
Paris HORTON	Son	M	S	MU	4	AL
Ida SHEFFIELD	Dau	F	S	MU	9M	AL
James GILBRETH	Nephew	M	S	MU	15	AL
King GOODLOE	Other	M	M	B	55	AL

Amanda is a key figure in the history of the Horton family. Ovoy Horton said she came to Jack Horton (Andrew Jackson Horton) as a servant, purchased for \$900, and Jack made her a free servant. Amanda was valued at \$900 in Jack's father's will; whether she was bought by Jack Horton or inherited by him from his father is a question.

Although Amanda's children by Jack Horton took his name, it is said that Amanda herself did not. Her maiden name was Jacobs. Whatever Amanda's status, she has left a significant legacy in the generations that came down from her, which will be revealed in the following pages that introduce her family, most of whom lived in the Pond Beat community but extended to Mullins Flat as well.

From this census, we can conclude that, depending on the month of her birth, Amanda, listed as 39 years of age, was born in 1841. If the information was recorded correctly in the census, her husband was considerably younger, as he was shown to be 27 years of age. Horton family members say she had another husband whose last name was Branford. She must have had this husband prior to Sheffield. The children Yancy, Virginia, Celia, and Everett are known to be the children of Jack Horton. However, the son listed as Paris Horton (age 4), who was born after the other children with the Horton name, is said by Horton family members to be the son of Branford, and Paris Branford is the name he used. It is possible the census taker assumed Paris was not a stepson, as the Horton children are listed, because he was younger, closer to the age of Ida Sheffield, who was nine months old.

Amanda and her husband John Sheffield had a blacksmith on their farm; this was the occupation of King Goodloe, who is shown as a farmhand in the census above.

The Thirteenth Census of the United States in 1910 listed Yancy Horton, head of household, and his wife Sophie both being 49 years of age. Two sons were living at home, Yancy Jr. (age 22) and Grover (age 24). Horton family members were classified as Mulatto. Also listed in the household were two hired hands, Daniel Love (age 24 and married) and Matthews Lyles (age 21 and single). An excerpt from the census:

148 148	Horton Yancy	Head	49	M	23
	Sophie	Wife	49	F	23
	Grover	Son	24	M	1
	Yancy Jr	Son	22	M	1
	Daniel Love	Hired hand	24	M	1
	Matthews Lyles	Hired hand	21	M	1
148 148	Woodard J. H.	Head	49	M	23



**The Everett Horton Family.** Everett Horton, who has a moustache and is wearing a dark hat, is seated on the left. His daughter Clara is directly behind him. Oldest daughter Leona is to the right. Cebelle is in front of them. Her brother James, wearing his hat at a jaunty tilt, is to the right. [After identifying him as James, Emma paused and questioned if he might be Ovoy.] Celestina is to the right of her father, and beside her is her mother, Frances Lacy Horton, with small son Spencer on her lap. Booker T. is in the front.

During the researcher's visit to the home of Emma Horton in March of 2001, Emma showed her a clipping of an article written by Dale James that she had saved from the June 9, 1991 issue of the *Huntsville Times*. The article was about family reunions held by those who once lived in Mullins Flat and Pond Beat.



Geraldine Horton Taylor and Ovoy Horton. Source: *The Huntsville Times*, June 9, 1991.

Ed Peters (*The Redstone Rocket*, July 8, 1987, p. 11) interviewed Ovoy Horton, his cousin Charles Burns, and Early P. Lacy. Mr. Burns and Mr. Lacy are discussed in another section of this report. The following quoted selection is taken from Peters' interview with Ovoy Horton:

Ovoy was 24 years old when he made his last crop on the land that had once belonged to the man who had purchased his great-grandmother [Amanda Jacobs Horton] for \$900 and made her a free servant.

In the fall of 1941, the Army had already bought their farm and the Hortons had moved away but were permitted to return and harvest the crops that they had in the ground at the time the transaction was made.

The patriarch of the big Horton farm in Mullins Flat was Ovoy's Grandfather Everett T. Horton. He had several hundred acres that extended from the Silver Hill area (area of the test stands on Dodd Road) to the southern face of Madkin Mountain and took in the old rock quarry.

Ovoy loved where he was and didn't want to leave, but as it turned out, he was able to maintain touch with it by working for the Army for the next 30 years.

The Horton name was prominent in both the Mullins Flat and Pond Beat communities. The Horton School was located on the north side of Buxton Road inside what is now McKinley Range. Horton's Ford (Huntsville Spring Branch) is where people went to be baptized.

Even while gathering his last crop, Ovoy Horton had found employment with Kershaw & Butler, the construction contractor that built the first buildings here for the Army. After a few months he went to work for the Army. He drove trucks and forklifts and worked in ammunition bunkers and warehouses.

He worked in a carpenter shop and said there was walnut furniture in use here for many years that he made from trees that he cut himself. He was laid off briefly in the years following World War II but was recalled soon and in the interim did not leave the arsenal, as he took a job with John Powell Chemical Co. setting up an insecticide factory in building 5681.

He retired from the Army in 1973 and has since retired from a second career at Chrysler in Huntsville.

He says that during the years he worked here he often visited the places he had fond memories of. These include the site of the family home in Silver Hill, still identifiable from an old pear tree that was in the yard. The Silver Hill School he attended was situated on the knoll just past the entrance road to the Redstone missile historic test stand.

He can identify the area where the creek used to back up, cutting his grandparents' house off from the rest of the world. During such periods, his horse, Belle, had been trained to swim across with a passenger and return to pick up another.

That same horse was swept from under his father while trying to cross Huntsville Spring Branch in high water. The father managed to grab on to a tree and fired his gun (men in the community wore guns in those days) to attract the attention of a rescue party.

He [Ovoy] can take you to where 'Adolphus Love's store was, across from the present day Product Assurance building. He also points out wooded

areas where he cut saw logs, and swamps where he cut tupelo blocks.

He can point out the trees in the NASA area that mark the spot of the Center Grove Church, which was dismantled and moved to the corner of Jordan Lane and Mastin Lake Road where its congregation is still active.

He can show you his “Lover’s Lane” near building 5681 that led to the house where his wife Emma lived when they were courting. They raised seven children, six of whom, he notes proudly, have graduated college while a seventh attended technical school.

In 1979, the Hortons held a family reunion. In researching family history, the Hortons found lines of kinship to the Jacobs, Burns, Joiner and Lacy families. The 1987 reunion brought together all of these families. Geraldine (the daughter of Ovoy Horton) noted, “If you start with Jacobs, you will pull in all these families.” [Evidence for this is found in the Alva Jacobs section.] Geraldine stated that some people had treated their lineages as somewhat of an embarrassment over the years, but her father Ovoy urged his children to take pride and learn about how they came about. She said, “Some said to leave it alone and keep it quiet, but he always wanted us to talk about it.”

Geraldine’s statement that lineages had sometimes been treated as an embarrassment over the years easily can be understood by talking with older people from the Black community. The reference pertains to White males who sometimes had children with Black women because the Black women were not able, either physically or economically, to refuse or resist the physical intimacy.

The teaching to stand proud that came down from Ovoy to his daughter Geraldine was, undoubtedly, taught by other Hortons to their children. Everett and Yancy Sr., as well as their peers in the Jacobs and Love families, owned land, worked hard, and supported their communities. Adolphus Love gave the land for the school in Mullins Flat and Yancy Horton Sr. donated the land for the school in Pond Beat, but they lived in the days when White men were addressed as “Mr.” and Black men were called “Uncle.”

In talking with people during the interviewing process, Yancy Horton Sr. was mentioned by a number of former residents of Pond Beat and the other nearby communities on what is now the arsenal. It seems everyone, both Black people and White people, knew Yancy Horton. James Long’s father was the manager for Schiffman & Company land in Pond Beat. The Longs lived down the road (now McAlpine) to the south of Yancy’s home.

James Long has said, “We were taught to call all Black people older than us Uncle and Aunt. Yancy Horton was on the board of the co-op. I saw him and said, “How are you, Uncle?” He said, “If I was your damn uncle, you wouldn’t claim me.” In the era when Black men were expected to step off the sidewalk (to the dirt and sometimes muddy streets) when a White man walked by, Yancy’s making such a reply reveals his character and could be an indication of his status in the Pond Beat community.



**From left to right: Cebelle Horton (daughter of Everett), Ovoy Horton (son of James and grandson of Everett), Celesta Horton (Ovoy's mother), and Charles Burns (son of Clara Horton and Johnny Burns and grandson of Everett). Both Ovoy and Burns were employed at RSA. Photo taken at the Redstone Rocket Test Stand. Photograph courtesy of Emma Horton.**

The Horton lineage is traced back to Jack Horton, whose name Amanda Jacobs gave to the four children she had by him. (One person interviewed said Jack had no children by a White wife, however, this is questioned). Each of these children, Everett T. Horton, Yancy Horton Sr., and Celia, received parcels of their father's land. They were prominent in the development of the Mullins Flat and Pond Beat Communities.

U.S. Census records of 1850 document that Amanda Jacobs was a daughter of Burwell Jacobs. Her age in 1850 was 11. Burwell (Burrell) Jacobs was a free "mulatto" prior to the Civil War. It has been shown in the preceding pages (page 219) that Yancy Horton said a Burwell Jacobs was his grandfather. Burwell's daughter would have been the right age to be the Amanda Jacobs who was Jack Horton's servant. Burwell (Burrell) Jacobs was discussed in detail in the Jacobs section and further information was presented there (pages 219-223).

**LIZZIE JOINER WARD (1900-2000)**  
**Interviewed in 1999**

Lizzie (Bessie) Ward was 99 years old at the time of the interview. She was born in 1900. Mrs. Ward lived with her caregiver, Lucille Rooks, who was her niece. Lizzie Ward was in frail health. She was helped to a wheelchair to sit with the researcher for the interview. However, her mind was still clear. The researcher talked with her no more than an hour so that she did not become overtired. Mrs. Ward passed away a few months after the interview. Her life encompassed the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century and entered the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Lizzie Ward said she was born on the Timmons plantation, and so was her mother. She said her grandfather on her daddy's side was William Timmons, and "Grandma on Daddy's side was a slave. We always stayed on his [Timmons] place." She said Timmons had a white wife, but he had children by her grandmother, whose name was Luisa [spelled as Mrs. Ward pronounced it]. Asked if she remembered the name of Timmons' White wife, Lizzie thought a bit and said it was Annie Latham

Lizzie Ward said her father was Alex Joiner. Her mother was Pearlie Jacobs. She said her mother "wasn't white, but she was set aside as a free nation." When the researcher asked what that meant, Mrs. Ward responded, "That's what I was told." Due to her frail condition, Mrs. Ward wasn't pressed for further explanation. The researcher did not want to stress her. In considering this later, the researcher concluded that since Mrs. Ward didn't consider her mother White or Black, and since "set apart as a free nation" was a term used in connection with Indian land, Mrs. Ward was probably referring to a Native American heritage that was associated with Luisa.

Lizzie Ward said her mother (Pearlie Jacobs) had wanted to be buried at the Jacobs Cemetery, but she couldn't be buried there. Mrs. Ward explained:

It [Jacobs Cemetery] was near the river and the backwater came in and stood. Timmons [cemetery] was higher up. There was one little stone in the colored cemetery, my brother, Claudie Joiner. He was in World War I.

According to Lizzie, the last ones buried in the "colored cemetery" were Jim Turner, Aaron Tate, and Joe Walker.

Lizzie Ward said she was raised by her sisters and brothers. She said,

My mother died when I was two years old. She died because she had milk leg. Her milk went down her leg. She had a baby born. When the baby died, she would milk out the milk on a brick.

[Note: Milk leg is basically a form of phlebitis. The white color led people to believe that milk had gone into the leg. The medical definition is: a swollen condition of the leg, usually in puerperal women, caused by an inflammation of veins, and characterized by a white appearance occasioned by an accumulation of serum and sometimes pus in the cellular tissue. Milk leg is also a colloquial term for a painful swelling of

the leg resulting from clotting and inflammation of the great saphenous or femoral veins, occurring sometimes in women after childbirth. Source: Dr. Kaylene Hughes, History Office, Redstone Arsenal.]

Lizzie Ward said that her grandmother [Luisa] had lived in the same house on the Timmons plantation that she had lived in while a Timmons slave. The house had three rooms. Two were used for bedrooms and one for a kitchen. She said the fireplace “was double-backed,” “came up through the center of the house,” and “had an empty space behind it.” In essence the house had a front porch and two bedrooms in the front with the fireplace shared on the inside wall between them. The back room was a kitchen.

The house was about a half-mile from the plantation house. She differentiated between two kinds of houses. She mentioned “slab over” houses, and said that a shingle house was good. That was what they had. Other people had ones made from boughs cut from trees. They were not as good.”

Lizzie stated, “There wasn’t no good house. Land flooded some places. Everybody had to move out of their houses. The first time they had school in the schoolhouse, the water swelled the floor.” At the time Lizzie was speaking, the researcher thought she said, “That was Hardin School,” but since no one else mentioned a Hardin School, she concluded that Lizzie must have been saying Horton and not Hardin. The Horton School was the one attended by Black children in that area.

When asked about getting water, Lizzie said, “We had to tote water, sometimes a half mile. There was a well on the Timmons place [near the plantation house]. We’d put a bucket on our head and carry another one in our hand.” When asked about food, Lizzie said they raised hogs, cows, chickens, and corn and vegetables. They also raised some cotton.

Lizzie’s Grandmother Luisa cooked in the fireplace. Lizzie said:

She [her Grandma Luisa] would heap coals on the oven. She made ash cakes. [How do you make ash cakes?] You take hot water and corn meal. You can pour soda in it. Baking powder makes it dry. You can use milk [instead of water] if you have it. You sweep the ashes back before you put it to cook so no grits be in it.

Lizzie said, “We swept the floor with a sage broom. Some folks had dirt floors. You get a croaker sack of ashes. Pound them on the floor, and then use a sage grass broom.” She said, “It was smelling good when you did this in the spring.”

Lizzie said that after World War I, her brothers (Claudie and Percy) bought some Timmons land. It wasn’t far from the “big house.” [At this point, the researcher asked Mrs. Ward if she was getting tired, and Mrs. Ward said she was, so the interview was ended.]

## LUCILLE ROOKS

(Born in 1925)

Interviewed in 1999

Being a responsible caregiver, Lucille Rooks had been sitting in an adjoining room and listening while the researcher talked with her aunt. Realizing that her aunt's answers had been limited, she told the researcher that she "knew about some of the things she'd been asking about."

Lucille Rooks is the granddaughter of Alexander and Pearlie Joiner. Lucille added the information Luther and John Albert had been "white." Another son, Elijah had been "dark." Lucille said her father, Percy Joiner, was born and reared in Morgan County. Her mother was Ellen Lacy. [Note: Percy Joiner and his brother Claudie Joiner bought parcels of land on the Timmons farm, near where their father, Alexander Joiner, was born after Claudie returned from World War I.]

Lucille discussed the foods that the people ate and grew. She said:

From the 1900's, probably to the 1940's, people ate turnip greens, sweet potatoes, and other vegetables they grew. They ate peanuts, too. They had boiling meat or game or possum or squirrel, coon, and rabbits. It was put in a black pot and hung over the fire. There was peanuts, too.

Lucille added, "You knew when you came home from school what you'd have—collard greens, baked sweet potatoes, green beans, pickles, berries."

Instead of sugar, we used molasses (dark). When we made a cake, we used flour and eggs, but instead of sugar, we'd use molasses. We had a wood stove. It was a big stove, a Home Comfort. It was made of cast iron. There was a tank on the side for heating water. The bottom was for browning. We cut wood from the woods to put in it.

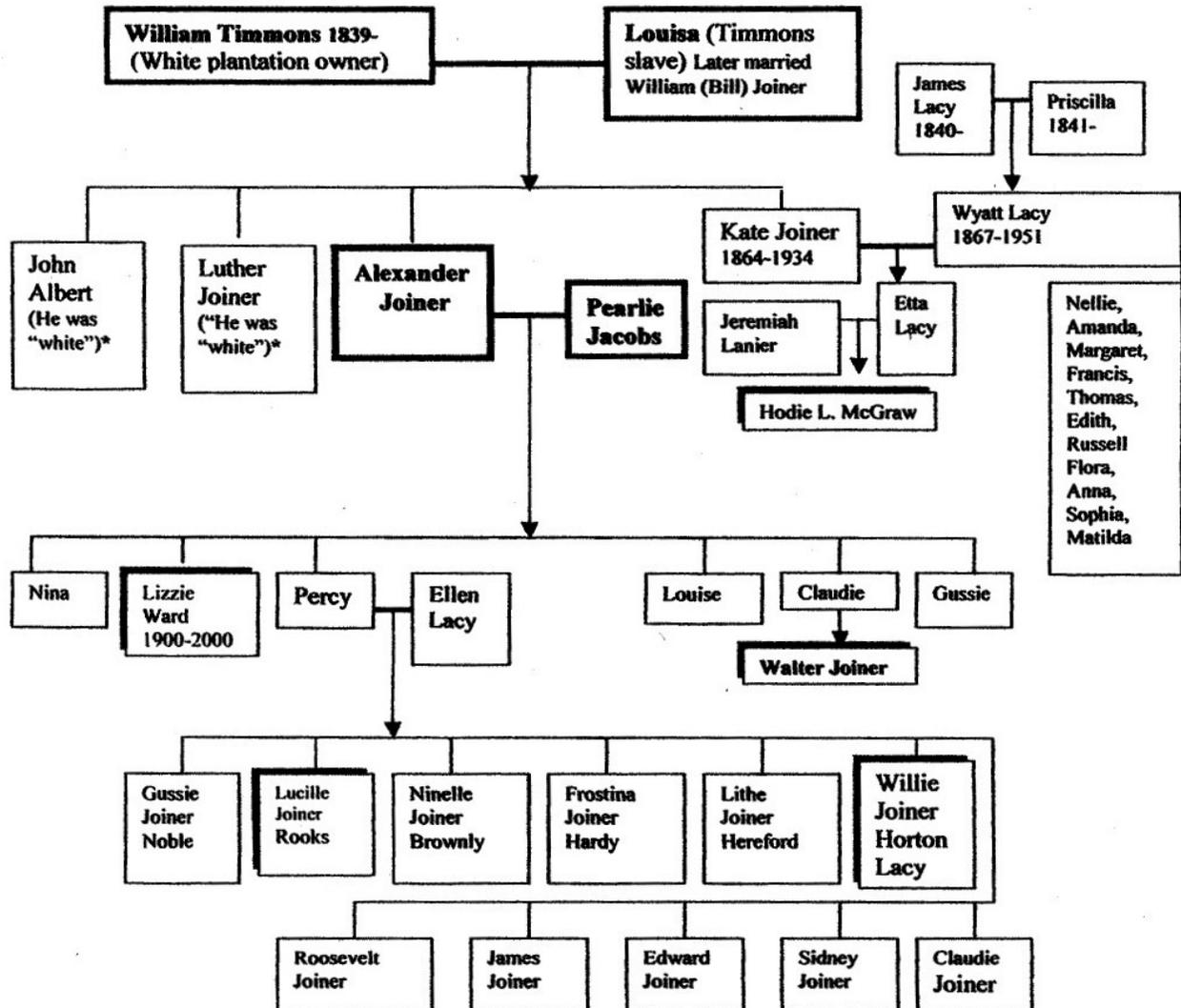
[Did you have a smoke house?] It was just out the back door. You stepped out the back door to the smoke house—it was just a few feet away.

[Did your family cure meat?] Yes. After the meat cured you could rub it in sugar cane salt. Season it out—let it stay so many days in regular salt, about a month. You couldn't lay meat on the ground. Daddy had a long bin made out of boards. The weather was what made the difference. Daddy killed the hogs when the weather was coming in so the meat wouldn't sour.

You'd hang up the sausage. My mother used jars for the fruit. She had a bin. She'd take the cottonseeds and put them over the jars to keep them from freezing.

Lucille Rooks said sweet potatoes were stored in the kiln, “where they ground when we made molasses.” The waste used from “grinding” the cane to make molasses was used to cover the sweet potatoes. Some people had a corner cutoff in they garden where they had a hole dug. They covered it with shucks.

The following family chart was drawn from information gained from Mrs. Ward, Lucille Rooks, Willie Joiner Lacy, and others who were interviewed.



This chart was compiled based on information received from a number of people, including Lizzie Ward, Lucille Rooks, Willie Joiner, Walter Joiner, and Hodie Lacy McGraw. The blocks highlighted are the names of those who were interviewed.

\*Lucille Rooks said of Luther and John Joiner, “They were white.” Luther and John joined the army and left the area. Luisa had one more son, Elijah; he was dark [no other information obtained].

### Descendants of William Timmons and Luisa: The Joiners

## **WILLIE JOINER HORTON LACY**

**Interviewed December 2000**

Willie Lacy's interview was one of the initial interviews conducted by the researcher six years ago (with a four year lapse before interviewing resumed). In calling that telephone number in June of 2005, the researcher was told Willie had moved to stay with relatives in another state.

### **Willie Joiner Lacy's Family**

Willie Lacy was born March 30, 1914, the daughter of Percy Joiner and Ellen Lacy. Ellen Lacy Joiner died in 1948 when she was "60-some" years old. Her maternal grandmother was Lucy Lacy. The family tree of Lucy Lacy and a photograph of her are presented in the section of Georgia Lacy Lanier. Willie had six sisters (Gussy Noble, Lucille Rooks, Ninelle Brownly, Frostina Hardy, and Lithe Hereford) and five brothers (Roosevelt Joiner, James Joiner, Edward Joiner, Sydney Joiner and Claudie Joiner). The Joiner lineage has been presented above.

Willie's great grandfather, William Timmons, was owner of the Timmons Plantation and her grandmother was his slave. Family members in Willie's line have been shown in heavily outlined boxes on the chart on page 268. Claudie Joiner, the father of Walter Joiner, also has been shadowed for the reader's attention, because the next interview to be presented is one conducted with Walter Joiner. Walter's father and Willie Joiner Lacy's father were brothers. At the time of the interviews, the family chart had not been developed, and the author did not know Willie and Walter were cousins.

Willie's first husband was William Horton. Willie Lacy's second husband was Alvin Leon Lacy. Since Lacy was her mother's maiden name, the interviewer asked if they were related; Willie said they were not. This marriage produced her youngest son, Henry Leon Lacy, with whom she was living at the time of the interview.

Willie's father, Percy (Buster) Joiner owned the parcel shown on the Army Real Estate Map as F-252. It has been established that Percy Joiner, who died in 1977 at the age of 86 (born about 1889) was the son of Alexander (Alex) Joiner and Pearlie Jacobs. Alex Joiner was the son of William Timmons. More in-depth discussion of Percy and the Joiner family is presented in the interview of Walter Joiner.

### **When Willie Was a Girl**

**The Horton School.** Willie went to Horton School (F-265). Her first husband William's grandfather, Yancy Horton Sr., had donated the land for it. She said she walked to the west from her parents' house about three miles to get to the school in Pond Beat. When the weather was bad, she and her siblings were taken to school in a wagon.

The school had two rooms, and two teachers. The grades were divided into two or three grades, “approximately grades 1 to 3 and 3 to 5.” The children sat on benches, sitting “two at a time” (two children to a bench). She said the benches had desks on the front and, “It was all attached. You could put your books on it and write on the desk.”

Willie said the school had a heater in each of the two rooms. The heater itself was tall and made of iron. The wood was put in it through a door in the front. The door was about five inches tall. The stove had a damper so you could smother the fire down but still keep the room warm. A pipe went from the stove up to a hole in the wall. Willie said the heater itself was called a “pot belly” stove. She said there was a room to put the wood for the stove in, and it “was like a closet.”

Willie explained that the wood for the stove was cut to about one-foot lengths. Her parents cut wood and took it to the school to help keep heat. It was *cold* in the winter. Other parents did the same. Willie said she was always a “tomboy,” so she helped her brothers take in and stack the wood.

School hours were from 8:00 to 3:00. Willie said some children had to work more and didn’t get to school too regularly. When asked about when school was in session, Willie said when their crops came in they didn’t go to school. They got up when the sun rose and went out to the field to pick cotton.

### **Percy Joiner’s House**

Willie said before she was born, her father lived in the house where she grew up, but he bought it after she was born. She described the construction as overlapping boards. It had a tin roof. Two rooms were in front and two rooms were in back. The kitchen was one of the back rooms. Willie remembered the house once had three rooms, but the fourth was added when more children came. Behind the house, they had a chicken house but no smoke house.

### **Daily Life**

**Picking Cotton.** The families and all the children would get together and pick cotton. It took about 1200 pounds to make a bale. They were paid by the bale weight. In the 1920s and 1930s and maybe beyond that, a bale brought from 200 to 300 dollars. They took the cotton to town to sell it.

She said that when her family picked cotton, she’d go to the house and get a baked sweet potato. Baked sweet potatoes were sent to the field to eat. Willie commented: “When there was strips in the cotton, we’d go out there and plant black-eyed peas in the field. Later we’d strip the peas and put them in fruit jars.”

**Food for the Family and Canning.** In the garden the family grew tomatoes, sweet potatoes, some white potatoes, string beans, carrots, okra, rutabagas, cucumbers, collard greens, and beets. Willie said her father had an orchard and grew apples, pears, and peaches. In addition, the family would get on a wagon and go blackberry picking. She said, "It's a wonder the snakes didn't eat us all up!"

Willie's mother, Ellen Lacy Joiner, "canned everything." She recalls her mother canning "some 300 cans [glass jars] of stuff." Willie said some people didn't can as much and would bring the food they grew around to sell. If they had enough to sell, her mother would sometimes buy it to can. Many people made gardens and sold vegetables. Willie said that a lot of people didn't have the "tools" to can. Willie said: "Everybody that had the land to grow it had a garden and grew lots of food."

Willie said everybody had chickens. Some people, but not too many, had turkeys. Farmers had hogs, and some had a cow. Her family had a milk cow. Some of the milk was set down in the house to clabber. That would be used to churn butter.

Hogs were killed in cold weather. Willie said:

The meat was salted down after it was cut in squares. It stayed under the salt to cure then it was put in the smoke house. The middling meat was hung up. You cook the fat down and have lard to cook with. Hams would be the lean. You put them in an airtight can. The neighbors would come and help. Then everybody [would] eat together.

**Making Molasses.** Percy Joiner also raised sugar cane. He made his own molasses. He had a mule to pull the crusher. They raised corn to feed the mules.

**Hunting.** Percy didn't hunt much, but his sons got rabbits and squirrels. Rabbits were plentiful. They also got possums. Willie said possums tasted good, and "you put candied yams around them when you served them."

### **Marriage to William Horton**

Willie Joiner married her first husband, William Horton, at the age of 18. William Horton was the son of Mattie and Connie Horton. She had known the Horton family all her life. When she married William Horton, they lived on a farm with his mother and father, Mattie and Connie Horton, but not in the same house.

Willie commented that Mattie and Connie had quite a few children. William's parents and his grandparents were their closest neighbors. She remembered William's grandfather Yancy Sr. and that his wife was Sophie Jacobs. She commented that Yancy was Pearl Higgenbotham's grandfather (see Pearl Higginbotham interview).

Willie was born on the land that is now RSA, as those of her family had been for generations, and her children were born there. She gave the names and ages [as of Dec. 18, 2000] of the four children she had with her husband William Horton: Sophie Horton Vann (“She will be 63 in January-she lives in Gary Indiana.”); Mattie Horton Lane (62) and William Horton (59), both of whom live in Chicago.

Willie said neighbors helped each other, and people watched out for each other’s children. Zera Jacobs was a neighbor who took care of one of Willie’s children when she needed child-care help.

Willie said that she had known her first husband, William Horton, and his family all her life. She remembered that Yancy died in the late 1930s.

### **Picking Cotton**

Willie commented about her children picking cotton:

I can remember when my kids would go out picking cotton in the morning before the bus would come. They would wake up before the sun would rise and would pick a sack of cotton. There were approximately 1200 pounds per bale of cotton, and two families would pick about three bales a week. They would pick on Saturday, in their spare time, and before and after school. Then the cotton would be taken downtown to the gin.

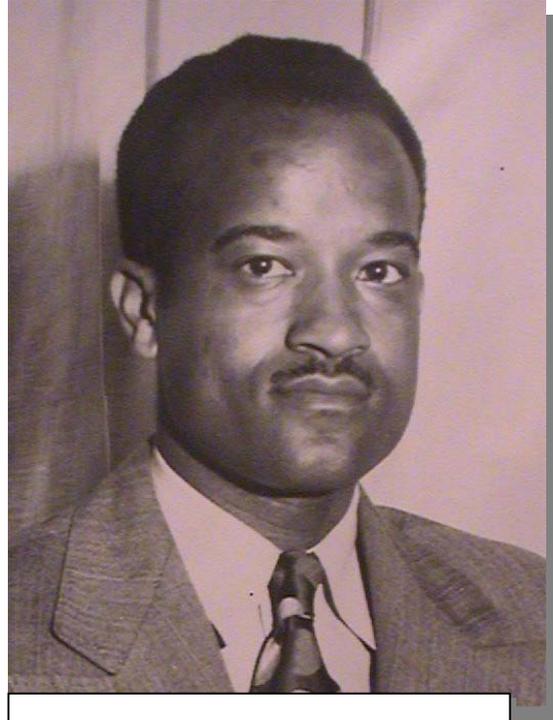
## WALTER JOINER

Interviewed in 2000, 2001, and Feb. 2005

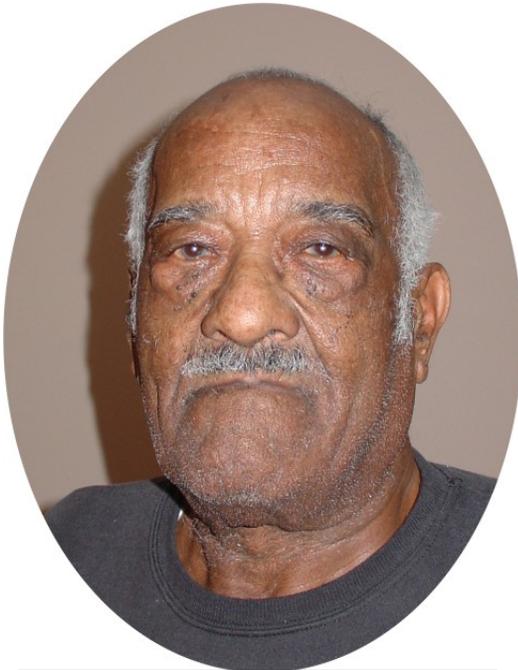
Walter Joiner is the son of Parthenia Wynn Joiner and Claudie Joiner, who was the son of Alex Joiner, who was the son of William Timmons and his slave Luisa (Luisa is said to have had four children by Timmons).

Parthenia was originally from Triana. Her mother was Mary McCauley Burks. Her brother served in the Spanish American War under Joe Wheeler and liked him. He took the name of Wheeler.

Claudie Joiner and Parthenia Wynn Joiner had only two children, Walter and his brother Herbert. After Claudie Joiner died, Parthenia married Connie Horton, who, therefore, became Walter's stepfather. The union brought him a number of stepbrothers who Connie Horton had with his first wife, Mattie: Frank, Everett, George, Ossie, Henry, Louise, Maureen, and William.



Walter Joiner, born in 1920, as a young man.



Walter Joiner in 2004.

Walter said his stepfather, Connie Horton, was the son of Yancy Horton Sr. who lived in Silverhill. Yancy Sr. was born of a slave housekeeper and her master, Jack Horton, who had three children by her. Yancy, Sr. had one sister and one brother. His land and his sister's land adjoined. She married Adolphus (Darphus) Love.

The fact that William Timmons, Walter's great grandfather, was a White plantation owner has been said before, but it is relevant to state it again here, because the Joiners purchased and lived on land that was formerly part of the Timmons plantation. This is where many of them had been born, lived, died, and had been buried. Walter Joiner's heritage is there.

Although Walter Joiner left Huntsville in early 1941, that was not what he had planned to do. He wanted to work on the land of his birth after the army took over the land. He went to the Redstone Ordnance Plant and applied for a job.

He said Black men were told they had to register with the government before they could get a job there. Walter, and others like him, “signed up” so they could get a job at the ordnance plant. After they “registered,” they were drafted and shipped off to the war. Walter was one of the first 15 people drafted from Madison County in early February of 1941, and “the Army didn’t have camps to keep them in” [Black soldiers were quartered and trained separately from White soldiers] when he was drafted. He was 19 years old and had completed two years at A&M University.

When the researcher later interviewed a White man who was contemporary to Walter in age, she told him what she’d heard about Black men being told that they had to “register” in order to get a job on the arsenal and then being drafted after they did so. (She sought the White perspective.) He said no Blacks were hired initially because there was no way to accommodate them, i.e., their hiring would require separate restrooms, etc. The history of the Ordnance Plant shows the policies on the hiring of both Blacks and women changed as manpower shortages grew more severe during the war, but the history of the ordnance plant and Huntsville Arsenal is not a story to be told here.

Walter served in Europe during World War II. He received five combat stars. He was in the Battle of the Bulge. He still remembered that they had no hot food. Walter noted that one of the assignments Black soldiers in Germany were given was driving supply trucks to the troops. The German soldiers were killing the American supply truck drivers, taking their U.S. Army uniforms to wear, and driving the trucks back through the U.S. Army lines. Assigning Black soldiers as drivers solved the problem. The Germans didn’t have any viable substitutes.

His unit came back through France and ended up in Guam for eight months. He and about 19 other Black soldiers wrote a letter to the State Department asking to be allowed to give up their U.S. citizenship. They wanted to stay in Guam and start a construction company. Their commanding officer would not pass the letter on up the chain of command.

Thus, after four and one-half years in the U.S. Army, Walter returned to the U.S., finished a college degree in building construction at a University in Iowa, and then went to Virginia. There he taught school, but teaching didn’t pay a lot, so at night he worked for a contractor supervising the pouring of concrete for a high-rise dam. Then he heard about the new era at Redstone Arsenal.

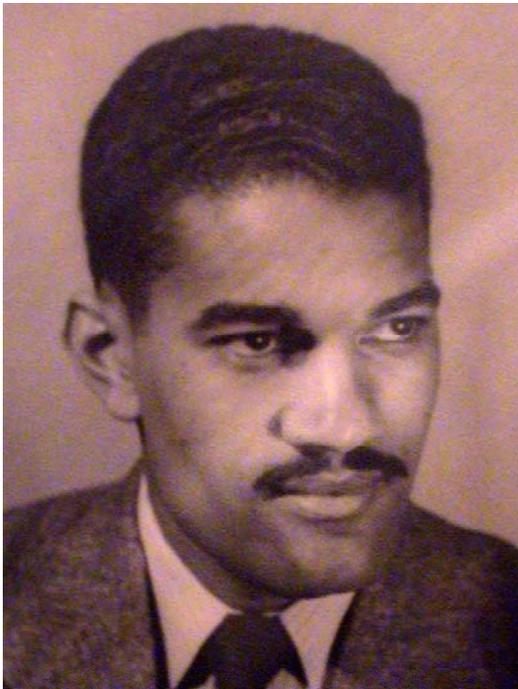
The first time Walter applied for a job at the installation, it was the Huntsville Arsenal and Redstone Ordnance Plant (WW II); he’d been told he’d have to register, and the result was that he was one of the first fifteen Black men in Madison County to be drafted. When he returned to Huntsville and applied for a job many years later, times had changed. The installation had become Redstone Arsenal, and the political climate had changed to that of the Cold War era.

Walter tried once more to work on the land of his birth. It was 1951. Walter Joiner had a college education and experience. In Virginia he had worked in making aircraft modules;

he had relevant experience. Walter said he went to “Squirrel Hill” [Building 112 on Redstone Arsenal] to apply for a job—a professional job. He was told “there was nowhere in the model-making area for a Nigger to work. Grounds-keeping, maybe.”

When asked if he thought color was still an important issue in working for the government, Walter answered, “Yes.”

Walter’s past experience with this Army installation throughout its history is not the focus of this research, but it is relevant because it set the tone for the researcher’s first contact with Mr. Joiner when asking him to give his time and talk with her to assist in research she was conducting for Redstone Arsenal. He had the opportunity to express what Redstone Arsenal had done for him. Mr. Joiner is an educated and analytical man who has been concerned with social issues. He said he would “tell it like it is,” and if the researcher did not want to hear it, it would be best if she not talk with him—it was obvious that continuing talks with Walter Joiner would be based on the researcher’s ability to cope with that. The researcher told Walter that he could “tell it like it was,” and she would “tell it like he said.” He could terminate an interview whenever he chose to do so.



**Herbert Joiner. Walter’s brother.**

Initial contact with Walter Joiner by telephone was in the summer of the year 2000. He had called the Directorate of Environmental Management and stated that he wanted to visit his former home place. He said his father was buried in a cemetery there.

Danny Dunn (Division Chief), Carolene Wu (Cultural Resources Manager), and the researcher, Beverly Curry (Staff Archaeologist), escorted Walter on his visit, driving to the area where his family once lived, trying to find landmarks that would identify past places. The roads had changed, and the landscape had changed. As Walter talked, some notes were taken and a tape recorder was turned on and off, but neither the pen on notebook nor the audio recording functioned well with the vehicle windows open, the group talking, and the vehicle bouncing in four wheel drive over the fields.

The second interview was in Walter’s home. For some respondents, information must be “pulled out” by constant probing. Walter is an intelligent man who is a living history book. It was hard to keep the focus limited to his life on the land that is RSA. However, listening to Walter talk about social issues and other happenings did provide insight

regarding the cultural context of the life and times. This was one of the last interviews conducted before the research project was “put on the back burner.”

The researcher was tasked with other duties at the arsenal. The interviewing research with people of the pre-arsenal communities did not resume until late 2004. She visited Walter Joiner for the third time in February 2005. That visit lasted almost four hours.



**Maureen Horton, stepsister to Walter Joiner.**

### **Where Walter’s Family Lived**

Walter’s mother, Parthenia Joiner Horton, is shown on the Army Real Estate Map as owning parcels F-251 and F-253. Parcel F-251 joined on its eastern boundary with the property of Percy Joiner (F-252). Parcel F-253 joined on its southern boundary with Percy’s property. Percy (Buster) Joiner, father of Willie Joiner Lacy (Willie Lacy interview), was Walter’s Uncle. It should be noted that Buster had a son Claudie, who was named after his grandfather, so the name Claudie Joiner appears in two different generations.

### **The Timmons Plantation and the Cemeteries**

The land where Walter’s family lived for generations was the Timmons Plantation, where Walter’s great grandmother once lived in a slave cabin and cooked in the fireplace (see Lizzie Ward interview). Walter said the Timmons place “went through a bunch of different hands.”

The cemetery where Walter’s great grandfather, William Timmons, the plantation owner, is buried is not far from the location of the plantation house. Walter said that when he was about 14 years old, he saw the cemetery. It had a brick wall around it. He wouldn’t go up to the cemetery; he would just stay by the road. [Black people didn’t wander around on White people’s property.] The Timmons house wasn’t too far from the cemetery, and he thought it was facing east because “it was looking over the hill.” Walter had never gone in the house. It had a big front porch and two chimneys, one on each end. You could see the house from the road because “all that land used to be clear pasture.” This gives us a glimpse of the scene over 70 years ago.

The patriarch of the Timmons Family, John Timmons, was born in 1795. The 1880 Madison County census shows his son, William Timmons, as 41 years of age in that year, and William’s wife Annie as 43. This is the William H. Timmons who was the great grandfather of Walter Joiner. Through him, the Joiners’ ancestry goes back to England.

NOTE: John Timmons was 55 years old when he died in 1845 (his wife, Catherine had died in 1840 at age 32). Madison County Probate Records (Volume 12, page 30), show that John left his son, William Hardy Simpson, born August 22, 1839, his entire estate. William was six years old. John's will provided "a support" for Margaret Finch "during her natural lifetime" and that she "have charge of my son." To Hughey Finch and his wife, John left "a support," and to any other lawful heirs, he left \$1.00. The will stated that if his son (William H. Timmons) were to die, the property was to be equally divided between Houston H. Lea (Lee), John Simpson, and Henry W. Wall, executors. John Simpson, guardian of William Timmons, took care of him and taught him the trade of blacksmith. He named his own son (William Timmons Simpson) after his ward.



Madison County in 1875. The Timmons Plantation was outlined in red by John Rankin. Map drawn by James H. Mayhew, Strolridge and Company, Cincinnati, Ohio.



**Timmons Cemetery. Photographs by John P. Rankin, December 2002.**





The cover over the burial of John Timmons. Photograph by John P. Rankin, December 2002.

### The Cemetery Where Claudie Joiner is Buried

Walter said his father, Claudie Joiner, a World War I veteran, is buried in a cemetery south of the plantation, down toward the river. Walter described walking south down a dirt road to get to the cemetery. A row of “shanty houses was along the road, along the east side of the hill,” and “whoever had the place” had built a long building with several doors for storing cotton. The shanty houses were the old slave quarters. Tenant farmers lived in them.” Walter said: “The land was all swampy. Every year it would be flooded. Sometimes you couldn’t get a wagon in the road.” Walter said the last ones buried there were Jim Turner, Aaron Tate, and Joe Walker.

Walter said the old cemetery that they went to used to belong to the plantation. It was in the middle of a field, about a half-acre that “they plowed right up to.” He didn’t know a name for the cemetery. He couldn’t recall it being called a name. It was not associated with any church. He knew it was a community cemetery “used during slave times.” [Lizzie Ward (born in 1900) called it the “Timmons Cemetery,” saying her mother Pearlie Jacobs was buried there. Lizzie was Walter Joiner’s aunt.]

Burial in the cemetery continued after the end of slavery. Walter said that most of the people buried there would belong to the Timmons or Joiner family. This would be consistent with the finding that many emancipated slaves continued to live in the vicinity of the plantations.

When Walter was fourteen or fifteen years old, he used mules to put in cedar posts. He put a four-foot hog wire fence around his father's grave. He did a good job. The photograph shows the remains of the fence that Walter put in 70 years ago. Walter still visits the cemetery, and when his son, who is a physician in Michigan, comes to visit his father, he accompanies him to the cemetery.



**The cemetery where Claudie Joiner is buried. Named Joiner-Lacy by the Army, it has been recommended for name change to Timmons-Joiner. Photograph by John Rankin, April 2003.**

The RSA Cultural Resources Manager told the researcher that two cemeteries on RSA (on the south side of Buxton road) were named Timmons Cemetery (this could still be seen on some maps) so the name of one had been changed to Lynch Cemetery. The one that has the Timmons monuments (p. 278) retained the Timmons name; the other, a short distance to the northeast of it was renamed Lynch Cemetery. [Note: In the 1880 Madison County census, the household of William H. Timmons included Elvira Lynch (Black), age 30, and three Lynch children (probably hers).] The Army may have named the second cemetery Timmons because it was on the Timmons plantation, and/or because Army records showed a second Timmons cemetery (“Colored”). However, the “Colored” Timmons Cemetery shown in Army records and known to former residents as the Timmons Cemetery was further south. The name on the 1999 Base Map shows it as the Lacey Cemetery. Army files from 1952 contain information [which resulted from the Whitman, Requardt & Smith survey that was contracted by the War Department in 1940]

for the “Colored” Timmons Cemetery. Names of those known to be interred were listed and the marble headstone and footstone of Claudie Joiner, with the death date of 1924, were documented, as shown below:

### **TIMMONS CEMETERY**

Whitman, Requardt & Smith, *Report on Graves – Colored Cemeteries*

*Maria Elle Timmons, 1937*

*Lottie Timmons, 1936*

*Shelby Timmons, 1924*

*Homer Walls, 1926*

*Joe Walker, 1940*

*Vernal Robinson, 1938*

*Aaron Tate, 1941*

*Grace Joiner, 1922*  
*Grave with marker gone*  
*Claudia Joiner, 1924*  
*Marble headstone and*  
*Footstone*  
*Group enclosed in fenced*  
*plot*

### **Author’s Note: PEARLIE JACOBS**

**JOINER** (wife of William Timmons’ son Alexander) WAS ALSO BURIED HERE.

The above documentation of Claudie Joiner’s headstone is irrefutable evidence that the cemetery shown as the Lacy Cemetery in 1999 [now referred to as the Joiner-Lacy Cemetery] is the Timmons Cemetery—Colored. The former residents interviewed in this study identified the cemetery as the former Timmons slave cemetery and said that after slavery, people of the community continued to be buried there.

Walter stated that the cemetery where Claudie is buried, located in a field south of where the Timmons slave quarters had been, was not associated with any church, and had become a community after the days of slavery.

Photograph by John P. Rankin.



**It has been recommended to the RSA CRM that the name of the Joiner-Lacy Cemetery be changed to the Timmons-Joiner Cemetery.**

The list of the “Slave Inhabitants” on the Timmons plantation in 1850, and the list of slaves John Timmons owned at the time of his death, are shown on the following pages. Following those are excerpts from the census showing some of the Timmons families [Black] who took the Timmons name and remained in the area after emancipation. The family of William Timmons was highlighted in a yellow block by John P. Rankin.

SCHEDULE 2. - Slave Inhabitants in 36 Dist  
of Alabama, enumerated by me, on the 15<sup>th</sup> d

List of  
slave  
inhabitants  
on the  
Timmons  
Plantation  
in 1850

1	2	DESCRIPTION.			6	7	8
		Age	Sex	Colour			
NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.		Number of Slaves.				Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	
1	John Timmons, '80.	1	33	m	B		1
2		1	24	m	B		2
3		1	27	m	B		3
4		1	24	m	B		4
5		1	27	m	B		5
6		1	33	m	M		6
7		1	30	m	M		7
8		1	41	m	B		8
9		1	26	m	B		9
10		1	14	m	B		10
11		1	15	m	B		11
12		1	13	m	B		12
13		1	13	m	B		13
14		1	11	m	M		14
15		1	8	m	M		15
16		1	7	m	M		16
17		1	8	m	B		17
18		1	4	m	B		18
19		1	3	m	B		19
20		1	5	m	B		20
21		1	2	m	B		21
22		1	4	m	B		22
23		1	2	m	M		23
24		1	8	m	B		24
25		1	1/2	a	B		25
26		1	2	m	B		26
27		1	2	m	B		27
28		1	60	f	B		28
29		1	65	f	M		29
30		1	30	f	B		30
31		1	38	f	M		31
32		1	26	f	M		32
33		1	28	f	B		33
34		1	24	f	B		34
35		1	18	f	B		35
36		1	30	f	B		36
37		1	28	f	B		37
38		1	34	f	B		38
39		1	16	f	B		39
40		1	27	f	B		40
41		1	24	f	B		41
42		1	20	f	B		42

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~~With no. 11 page 15 of Account to said order said Well was duly recorded  
 on the 14th of November 1845~~

~~For W. King 250.00~~

An Appraisement of the personal property belonging to the Estate of John Timmons,  
 Deceased.

An Appraisement of John Timmons property by Sheriff Hattley James Gordon  
 M. A. Lewis & Thos. Owen on 14th Nov 1845.

Robert	Age 57 years	25.00
Kelster & Child Ins.		600.00
Sick		500.00
Bill		650.00
Elisha		500.00
Johnnall	50 years	250.00
Charlotte	65 "	500.00
Batharine	26 "	500.00
Maria	22 "	500.00
Leeah	24 "	500.00
Louisa	6 "	250.00
Ering	2 "	125.00
Mallida	26 "	400.00
Alex	6 "	250.00
Tom	7 "	300.00
Stoney	8 "	150.00
Lucinda	1 "	100.00
Andrew	26 "	600.00
Grace	26 "	400.00
Wise	12 "	400.00
Emaline	11 "	350.00
Walter	9 "	350.00
Ephraim	7 "	250.00
Abney	6 "	225.00
Abney	5 "	200.00
Priscilla	4 "	175.00
Charity	3 "	150.00
Mary	1 "	100.00
George	37 "	500.00
Monroe	21 "	600.00
Henry	19 "	600.00
Jim	50 "	600.00
Dick	51 "	350.00
Julia	40 "	250.00
Ben	19 "	300.00
Sally	14 "	600.00
Charles	35 "	500.00
Mat	38 "	500.00
Tray	60 "	500.00
Pear	54 "	225.00
Jos	28 "	500.00
		<hr/>
		6000

**Estate of  
 John Timmons  
 Slave List (1845)**

Priscilla,  
 grandmother of  
 Earl P. Lacy, is  
 shown in the list.

Hampshire 22 years  
 Emmitt 28 "  
 Sally 22 "

Amount Carried forward \$14,745.00  
 Amount Brought forward of 14,745.00  
 625.00  
 100.00  
 500.00

Census Place: Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 139C

Excerpts from  
1880 census

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Felix JOINER</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>AL</b>
Millie JOINER	Wife	F	M	MU	23	AL
Richard JOINER	Son	M	S	MU	4	AL
Parthanna JOINER	Dau	F	S	MU	1	AL

Census Place: Township 5, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 139C

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Elisia TIMMONS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>AL</b>
Liza TIMMONS	Wife	F	M	B	25	AL
Henry TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	7	AL
Martha TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	1	AL

Census Place: Township 5, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 139D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Andrew TIMMONS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>SC</b>
Gracy TIMMONS	Wife	F	M	B	60	AL
Ellen TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	28	AL
Amanda TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	24	AL
Jackson TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	22	AL
Henry TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	18	AL

Census Place: Township 5, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 139D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>William H. TIMMONS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>AL</b>
Annie TIMMONS	Wife	F	M	W	43	AL
John TIMMONS	Son	M	S	W	12	AL
Sophie TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	W	9	AL
Margaret FINCH	Aunt	F	W	W	85	SC
Edwin FINCH	Nephew	M	S	W	17	AL
Elvira LYNCH	Other	F	W	B	30	AL
George LYNCH	Other	M	S	B	11	AL
Lucy LYNCH	Other	F	S	B	5M	AL
Lella LYNCH	Other	F	S	B	13	AL

Census Place: Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 139D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>George TIMMONS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>AL</b>
Martha TIMMONS	Wife	F	M	B	55	VA
Benjamin TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	22	AL
Mary TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	19	AL
Caleb TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	10	AL

Census Place: Township 5, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 139D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>James TIMMONS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>AL</b>
Lillas TIMMONS	Wife	F	M	B	22	AL

Anna TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	4	AL
Berta TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	2	AL

Census Place: Township 5, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 139D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Ephram TIMMONS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>AL</b>
Ellen TIMMONS	Wife	F	M	B	37	AL
Carrie TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	16	AL
William BURTON	Other	M	S	B	30	AL

Census Place: Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 139D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Rollie TIMMONS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>AL</b>
Victoria TIMMONS	Wife	F	M	B	25	AL
Luke TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	6	AL
Annaias TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	2	AL
Mary B. TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	1	AL
Aggie TIMMONS	Mother	F	W	B	70	AL

Census Place: Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 140A

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Jacob TIMMONS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>AL</b>
Emmerline TIMMONS	Wife	F	M	B	40	AL
Moses TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	20	AL
Louisa TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	15	AL
Jammes TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	12	AL
Sarah TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	10	AL
Jackson TIMMONS	Son	M	S	B	7	AL
Prissilla TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	5	AL
Emmerline TIMMONS	Dau	F	S	B	2	AL

### Walter Remembered Other Owners of the Timmons Plantation

Walter said Dr. Russell owned “the Timmons place” at one time. He had a clubhouse where he and his friends gambled. Walter’s mother told him that a bunch of bigwigs, lawyers and such, would come in from Huntsville and play poker on the weekends. Walter’s father went there and cooked for them to make extra money. Walter said Dr. Russell sold the land to Lonnie Wilson “around the 1920’s or earlier.” Walter’s mother told him this. Walter said he saw the Timmons place from the road. He explained, “You didn’t mess around on the property.”

Walter did not provide Dr. Russell’s first name. Goldsmith and Fulton (1985) in *Medicine Bags and Bumpy Roads*, provide biographical information for Dr. Hugo Russell (p. 241-242). The authors state that Hugo (“Hughy”) Russell’s father, Dr. William Russell, practiced medicine in Morgan County, and he had several cousins and uncle “who were and are doctors” (p. 241). He was born in 1880 in Apple Grove in Morgan County. When Hugo was eight years old, his father died and his family moved to Oklahoma. He grew up being a working cowboy before returning to

Alabama and attending the University of Alabama where he earned his medical degree in 1912. Goldsmith and Fulton state that Dr. Russell practiced medicine in Farley before moving to Huntsville in 1915. Therefore, Hugh Russell would fit within the timeframe that Walter Joiner gave for “Dr. Russell” selling the Timmons place “around 1920 or earlier.”

“The Timmons place” is shown as owned by D.L. Wilson on the Army Real Estate Map. Wilson’s holdings did not include some of the old plantation land that was owned by the Joiners (Parcel F-251) (shown in the name of Walter’s mother) and Parcel F-253, owned by his uncle (F-253). Walter said his father’s land was on the east side of the dirt road. The road ended at a bluff. This was identified on the map as Lehman’s Ferry Road. The location of a Ferry at the Bluff has been substantiated.

### **The Houses of Claudie, Percy, and Alex Joiner**

**Claudie Joiner Built a House.** While he was cutting timber, Claudie built a three-room house for his family on the land that he owned [Parcel F-251]. He also built a barn. Walter said that back then most men didn’t own their land and they would clear someone else’s land to have use of it for five years. Then the land would go back to the owner. They had to leave the stumps and go around them. When they cleared it, they usually gave away the logs, which is how Claudie got the timber to build his house.

**Claudie Joiner’s Sawmill.** Back then people built houses from raw boards. Claudie milled his own timber to build his house. Walter said his father had a steam engine sawmill. He said most old plantation owners had their own sawmill. Walter gave an example, describing the sawmill of Sam Harris: (Walter’s first-hand knowledge about Sam Harris and the Harris property is presented in the Harris section.)

The sawmill was at the end of the pond. It needed steam to run. There was a group of houses around Madkin Mountain, and a road that would run up through it. The army may have put a recreation center around there, and a pool.

Walter said:

He [Claudie Joiner] had to cut the timber into 12 inch cross tie stock. Then he carried it to Hobbs Island, the NC and S&L Railroad on the river, where they put it on a barge and pushed up river to Guntersville. From there it went on the train to Gadsden.

Claudie Joiner continued to cut wood and sell it until he got pneumonia. He did not recover from the pneumonia. His widow, Parthenia, married Connie Horton.



[Note: The tradition of transporting on the river goes back to the 1800s, a few decades before Claudie's return from World War I. Lavonne Myrick provided the following information: The great grandfather of Mary Cobb Morris was the first station attendant at the Hobbs Island Depot. Two paddlewheel steamers docked at the depot—the Huntsvillian and the Guntersvillian. Men loaded wagons with their cargos to be hauled and traversed dirt roads to reach the depot. The roads turned to mud when it rained. The men carried long wooden poles to pry the axels out of the mud. The Mercury and Chase railroad had boxcars 40 feet long. The boats were 200 feet long, and two or three boxcars were put on each side. The trip to Guntersville was about 20 miles long. For further information, Myrick recommended a book entitled *History of the Railroad* by Singleton, a local Madison County author.]

**Walter Joiner Described His Home.** Apparently, Parthenia Wynn Joiner Horton and Connie Horton added on to the three-room house originally built by Claudie Joiner. Adding rooms as the family grew was customary, and Connie had children by his first marriage. When Walter was asked to describe the house where he'd lived, he said:

There were three bedrooms, dining room, and a kitchen. We had fireplaces, but most of the heat came from a wood stove that heated the kitchen and the dining room. Most of the houses were built like that.

[Did you cook in the fireplace?]

Usually only when you wanted a snack. You would put the sweet potatoes in the hot ashes. You could also make popcorn in the old popcorn poppers. You could roast peanuts in the fireplace, also. Those were the types of foods that would last all winter. There wasn't anywhere to go, so people would do that.

Walter commented that back then, people used long, flat, wood [burning] heaters. They used them for cooking and for heat. The door was in the end. The heater was about four feet long and about two feet wide. It had eyes on it and you could cook on it. The eye was a circular piece that could be removed from the top surface of the stove. The cooking pot would be set in the opening, exposed to the fire when the eye was removed.

Parthenia bought a refrigerator. It was powered by kerosene. Walter said, "It would keep a lot of food." Many people would buy 100 pounds of ice from town or a wagon that came around. "Lots of times" a peddler would come through in a grocery truck to sell groceries to them as well. This was called a rolling store. Walter said, "We had a garden with lots of vegetables, and everyone had one to two cows."

Parthenia and Connie Horton had a generator. So they had some "electric lights." Walter said only a few people had electric lights. The generator had 17 glass batteries in it. They would put a quart of gas in the tank, and it would run from the time they started it to 10 or 11 p.m. It would keep the batteries charged. What Walter described was what people called having "Delco lights."

**Percy (Buster) Joiner's House.** Walter stated:

When my uncle [Buster Joiner] bought part of the old Timmons Plantation, the house was already there, but when they surveyed it, the house fell on our side of the road. [This is not clear, but it seems they switched parcels.] He and my daddy had borrowed the money to buy 40 acres each--\$2000 for 80 acres. The house was old but well built. It had plastered walls. Upscale. Mill cut lumber. The wood was poplar. The house was drop sided. [This was on Parcel F-253.]

It was wide enough to put two beds in a room. It was two rooms plus a lean-to. Most chimneys were made of stone—rock layers. People would go out to the mountain and carry them back. Stonemasons used a rod stuck down, hit it, and cut it. You chisel out a groove to split out a rock. The split is a little piece of metal. The wedge goes down between, so the wedge doesn't get hung up on the stone.

My uncle put two more rooms on the house, and a lean-to. The original room was so big you could put three behind it. The original room was about 16 feet.

Walter said one of the big problems his uncle had was that he was a “cotton man.” He bought feed for his livestock from Walter's family: “Long about June he had to buy corn and hay from us.”

**Grandfather Alex Joiner.** Walter said:

Granddaddy Alex lived in a two-room tenant house. He wouldn't cook. My uncle left the horse over there. Granddaddy had a bunch of children. He'd get on his horse and visit the neighbors (his kids), and eat dinner wherever he was. Sometimes he would stand in the middle between our house and my uncle's and holler and ask who had the best dinner. Whoever did, the kids would take it on a plate to him.

Granddaddy had a Carhardt [a name brand coat—the company is still in business] with a pouch in the back, like a hunting coat. He filled the pouch with tobacco. If you wanted to make him mad, get his coat and wash it. It would lose its water repellent.

He didn't think he had to work. [Question: Did that have anything to do with his being the son of William Timmons?] Yes, it did have to do with his being Timmons' son. After slavery, they said they'd give you so many acres. My people didn't get it. I don't think anybody did.

**Jim Turner, a Neighbor.** Walter said “Old man Jim Turner” lived on part of the Timmons place. [His name was not on the Army Real Estate Map at the time of sale, so he must have been a tenant.] Instead of chopping cotton, he had big white geese. He would turn them out, and at a certain time they would come back to roost.

## **Daily Life**

**Farmers and Farming.** Walter said that about three miles south from their house, where the Army has a recreation area now, they rented the land to use for growing corn. (They also grew hay.) They had a corral there to leave the working stock. His mother would take hot food to the people who worked for his daddy before he died. One of the men lived in his grandfather’s house and another lived in a little house on his Uncle Buster’s (Percy Joiner) place. Walter said they worked the land three or four years after his daddy died.

[What was the difference between sharecroppers and tenant farmers?]

Sharecroppers and tenant farmers were about the same thing. Some people were day hands. They got paid by the day. The sharecroppers gave a part of their crops. Some people rented the land and had their own equipment and horses, but they also gave a share of the crops to the owners.

If a man didn’t have a large family, he couldn’t really get a place. They [the landowners] wanted families to be able to do everything. [What would you do if you were just a man and wife?] You’d do the best you could, by just doing day labor, or wherever you could get a job.

Walter said, “Some tenants who didn’t have a family got on, living in one of the small row houses. There was a row of them down on the old Timmons place. They were the old slave quarters.” He said there was a row of these shanty type houses “down by Lee’s corner” (The Lee Plantation).

The landowners would go to the company store, where you would get shoes and overalls for the tenants. They would then charge the tenant farmers for that. At the end of the year they would look and see if the tenants owed them any money, and if they did, that would come out of their crops.

The problem was that if the tenants would want to go and get their stuff from a different store, they would still have to pay for the goods the landowner bought for them. They would also mark everything up at the company store, so it was more expensive. They would also mark up the groceries. They would charge 25 cents on the dollar, wouldn’t use the money for six months, and then get charged 50 cents on the dollar.

In other words, if the tenant charged 25 cents worth and had a dollar of credit, six months later that 25 cents had become 50 cents taken out of his dollar.

**Fishing.** [Did you go fishing?]

When the river got up, there would be a lot of flooding down there [in Pond Beat] and a lot of fish got into the ponds. Then the water would recede, and the fish would be trapped in those ponds. Men would put chicken wire over the holes (channels) to keep them back in the ponds. [Natural fish weirs!] There were all sizes of ponds. Some were so close to the river we could tell when the river was up because the water would rise in blue holes [sink holes]. They'd go dry about August. We would seine Rock Pond by the house. We were teenagers. We'd divide up the fish and give some to the older people as well.

**The Doctor.** Walter Joiner said, "My mother had things pretty good. Dr. Duncan, he was old, came 15 miles out when my brother had an epileptic seizure.

**Churches.** Walter said there were twin churches, Center Grove and Cedar Grove. They were Methodist churches. The first Cedar Grove Church was made of logs, but it was rebuilt. There was a Church at the end of Patton Road. The Gaines church was where the old Headquarters was.

**Baptism.** Walter said, "The ford just above the bridge, between McDonnell Creek and where Huntsville Spring Branch comes in, is where people were baptized. This was identified as Horton's Ford.

**The Mail.** Some people had to walk three miles just to get the mail. At the Farley School there was a bunch of mailboxes for everyone in the neighborhood. Walter said, "In the evening, I had to ride a horse three miles to get the mail."

**School.** Walter explained that the schools on the pre-arsenal land that were for Black children had only the lower grades, not high school:

The school was down the road. The road used to be just a dirt road with a few houses on it and the school was right back up there. It was Horton School [F-265] Yancy Horton gave the land for it. They used to call where the Horton School was Jamar Hill, because the stickers would get on their feet.

The researcher asked Walter Joiner what stickers getting on their feet had to do with the hill being called Jamar Hill. Walter asked her, "You don't know what a jamar is?" When she said she did not, Walter said, "Jamars are small, round burrs." The researcher is interested in local names for things, and likes to learn a new one, so she recorded this in her notes. She does not doubt that the hill on which Horton School set

was called Jamar Hill, or that Jamar Hill probably had stickers on it that got in your feet. However, Walter's defining "jamars" as "small round stickers" has led to another question—was Walter exercising tongue-in-cheek humor here?

It was not until the researcher had delved further into old maps and talked with more people that she learned that prior to and during the Civil War years the Jamar and Owen families (they were related) owned an extensive amount of land in Pond Beat, probably before the name Pond Beat came about. They owned land on the west side of McAlpine Road long before the owner was Darwin or Schiffman. Thus, is possible that Jamar Hill was, in the pre-Civil War era, part of a Jamar plantation. On the other hand, it could have been called Jamar Hill because Black families who were emancipated from a Jamar Plantation resided there. However, the researcher wonders if Walter Joiner knew any Jamars and thought of them as being like "small, round burrs."

According to Walter, there were no Madison County schools for Blacks after the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. There were many students for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade because "that was where others [schools] left off." Walter said:

The only county high school for Black kids was at A&M, which was a long way [from the communities on what is now the arsenal]. One student came all the way from Courtland to go to A&M. People had car pools in Huntsville. A&M got Federal money and some, but not much, from the State. The State gave A&M what money was left over after the University of Alabama and Auburn University got theirs.

At the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Walter went to school at A&M. He had a distant cousin on his mother's side, Mattie Rice, with whom he could stay in Huntsville. Since Mattie helped out by having Walter stay at her home, to reciprocate, Walter's mother sent up wagonloads of wood to her, and would order a ton of coal sent to her. Walter did what he could to help her with chores.

Sometimes Walter would go home on weekends, but it was about 15 miles to his home, so most of the time he stayed in town. Transportation from home to school was a determining factor. Apparently, he stayed at home part of the time as he mentioned Sam Harris [Sr.] would give him a ride on Mondays and Friday. There was no agreement or arrangement about the rides. He said Sam Harris "happened to drive by" at the right time to give him a ride on those days.

The statement held the implication that a more formal arrangement for the ride would not have been suitable in that day and time. Sam Harris, Sr. was a White man who operated a large farm located on the Farley-Triana Road to the west of where the Joiners lived. Walter discussed Sam Harris at length. He used to go to Sam's blacksmith shop and watch Sam work. Sometimes, he worked the bellows for him. Walter was not employed by Sam Harris; he went to watch and learn. Apparently, Sam Harris respected a young man who wanted to learn. Walter's comments about the

Harris farm are presented in the section of this manuscript entitled “The Harris Family: Life at the Big House (Lee House) and the Harris House.”

While he was in college, Walter worked for TVA in the summers. He went to jobs in Nashville, Watts Bar Dam, and Knoxville between age 16 and the Army. Walter majored in Agriculture. TVA had a co-op program, so during the co-op years he cleaned up and picked up. Walter said, “You had to be registered and go to school the next year. Then the co-op would match what you made on the job for school expenses. In later years, and with more education and experience, he worked with TVA on many other jobs.

During his teen years, Walter continued to have a second home with Mattie. Mattie had two daughters. Walter said: “I’d plant her a garden and work in it when I got back from Tennessee. When you room with somebody, you help them.”

Working at TVA during summers while a co-op student, Walter learned to use dynamite and to blow out stumps. He took a rod and drove it under the stump. Then put the dynamite under it at an angle. He went home to Pond Beat and removed unwanted stumps for the family.

**Walter’s FFA project.** Walter was a member of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) when he was in high school. He had a project to do in FFA--7 acres to farm. Most people grew cotton. He wanted to diversify, so he took one acre and planted sweet potatoes. In the fall, he stayed at home on weekends. When he got home from school, he would take the tractor out. He rigged it up to have two blades. Then he’d go up the road, taking with him brown bags that would hold a bushel. The women and children would pick the sweet potatoes and put them in a basket, and all he had to do was take them to the shed. The women did most of the work. In that year he made the same amount of money on just that one acre of sweet potatoes as others made on their whole crop of cotton, because cotton prices went down.

This may have been the time when Mr. Sam Harris, Sr. was giving him a ride back and forth to school at the beginning and end of the week, as Walter said that he learned about growing sweet potatoes from Sam Harris.

### **The First School Bus for Black Children**

Walter stated:

We had no school bus in our neighborhood. The colored children walked to school, and when the White children went by on the school bus [on their way to Farley School], and we were walking. They’d stop [on their way to Farley School], and the bus driver would let them pick up rocks to throw at us. The bus driver’s son would be throwing them, too.

About 1939, an instructor from A&M College took the initiative in getting a school bus for the Black children. Walter said that Mr. Mayberry was an aggressive agriculture instructor at the college. Walter said Mayberry used his own money to buy the bus. The bus probably cost about \$40. It was in the junkyard. It didn't run. They [people at the junkyard] were glad to get rid of it, and they gave him a rebuilt engine. Walter said they [people at the junk yard] wouldn't have sold the bus to Mayberry if they had known what he was going to do with it, but they assumed he was going to use it to haul fieldworkers to the larger plantations, which was a common practice of the time. Walter said Mayberry had "jumped across."

The bus had wooden sides and roll-down canvas "windows." Walter helped to get the old bus running. They succeeded, and the Black youth from Pond Beat had a ride to A&M. Walter said:

We got it running and took the kids from Pond Beat to school. Then the county said we couldn't transport children on the bus because we had no insurance. The county agent couldn't get insurance, so he decided to make certificates. Every week a kid would pay \$1.25 to ride the bus and would get one of those certificates that said that the kid had part ownership in the bus. So they couldn't say you paid to ride.

Once we picked up three kids from Whitesburg Drive, and a man named Hays met the bus and said if we picked up the children from that farm, they would seize the bus. Walter Fleming said, "You pick up any children off my place, I'll burn the bus." He died last year [2000]. His son Aaron is almost 80 now [stated in 2001].

Walter explained that the plantation owners did not want the Black children picked up to go to school, because they were the work force for the crops. The plantation owners, who had both sharecroppers and tenant farmers, were determined to control the people on their land. The Fleming plantation had both tenant farmers and day laborers living there.

Walter said the bus driver lived just below the Center Grove Church, and he said that was the area shown as Green Grove on the old map the researcher had. It seemed that he did not know it as Green Grove. Once they had the bus, Walter was able to go to school that winter, as he had a way home and back. When the researcher talked with Alva Jacobs, he said he had ridden the bus, and he remembered Walter Joiner driving it sometimes, because he was one of the older kids, maybe 19 years old at the time.

## **Gins and Mills**

**The Gin.** Walter said all the Blacks got together and formed their own gin. He stated:

The White gin was for plantation owners. Big owners wanted to freeze out small owners. The gin was operating all the time I lived out there. You had to go up [what is now] Patton Road. In 1938 and 1939, I'd leave home at 3 or 4 a.m. and bring the mules and wagon and take the cotton to the gin on Brown Street. Woodall Produce is there now. It was one block from Clinton Street to Holmes Avenue, where they put the overpass and blocked the street. He left the mules and wagon at the gin and went on to school at A&M.

**A Mill: Sorghum Molasses Making on Dave Barley's Farm** (Parcel D-173). Walter said his family grew cane, emphasizing, "It was not the same sugar cane as they grow in Florence and South Alabama which takes about twelve months to mature. What we grew matured in about six months." They stripped their cane and carried it to "old man Dave Barley" [Dave Barley had a son named Dave, so "old" distinguished between the two]. Dave Barley's mill was up on the top of a hill. It was mule-drawn. The cane was fed in by hand. The mill was a big steel drum "that went round and round," crushing the cane. The juice went into the barrel. A pipe went from the barrel to a copper pan."

The juice was cooked down to heavy syrup. Walter Joiner explained:

Old Dave had a rock furnace. It was about 8 feet long and 4 feet wide with divisions in it. It had a smokestack at the end. He used a long copper pan with divisions in it. As the juice cooked down, he'd move it to the front of the pan. There was a spigot in the end of the pan for it to run out.

He'd get the pan full of juice and cook it until the water evaporated. Until the steam quit coming off. Then he'd turn a faucet that was on the end of the pan. He put his syrup in buckets. We put ours in a barrel. We went down to the Coke plant and got wooden barrels. We'd wash them and have them ready to put the syrup in. The biggest trouble was getting the syrup to pour out in the wintertime.

Walter's cousin, Willie Lacy, said her father, Percy Joiner, had a mule driven press and made molasses. Since Percy was Walter's uncle and neighbor, this suggests that Percy made molasses at one point in time but may have stopped doing so.

### **Moonshine/Home Brew**

The residue from making syrup was used for making home brew and moonshine. In the West Indies, the residue from making sugar resulted in the origin of rum. In Alabama we had molasses strap and moonshine and home brew. Walter said you had to be careful when putting up home brew, because "if you put it up before it got through breathing, it would blow the bottle up." A number of people the researcher

talked with mentioned making “home brew,” and each one of them had said “you only made what you wanted to drink right away, because if you kept it, it would explode.” Apparently, they bottled it before it got through breathing.

Molasses strap was used to make corn moonshine. Many people made moonshine. Walter smiled as he remembered:

We had a hog lot by the creek that went all the way to Huntsville Creek to Triana. Daddy had option on land for timber [this land was later taken by TVA]. In the summer we had to go down there and take barrels of water to the hogs. We went down there and noticed the hogs weren't up in their feeding place. I found the hogs. The guy who had a wildcat still dumped his mash out there in the creek. The hogs found it.

### **The Bridge and the Ford**

**The Bridge.** Walter said:

First they built a bridge and then later on they extended [what is now] Patton Road because they built a bridge. That took ten years because of the County Commissioner. He had the materials, so he just built the bridge, even though the road didn't go up to it. You would have to climb a ladder to get to the bridge to walk across it. The bridge was just down river from Horton's Ford.

**The Ford.** Walter said:

The ford wasn't more than a half-mile above the bridge, off what is Patton Road. We had to bring the cotton, so we would ford there above the bridge. What they used to do before the arsenal contaminated the river was they would drive the horses to it and let them drink water.

This was probably Horton's Ford that has been mentioned by other former residents.

### **The Tennessee River and TVA**

“The river would back up so much that the road would be cut off,” Walter said. “The water went all the way up and under the school [Horton School, which was on the Farley-Triana Road].” Walter stated:

When they [TVA] decided to put Wheeler Dam in, they backed up all that land with water.

When the TVA came, there were 77 acres down there [toward the river] that they bought up and totally cleared up. Walter's father had an

option on it since 1918—an option to buy the timber. TVA ended up paying for the timber on that land.

When TVA was clearing swamps, they hauled the logs to the Tennessee River and built a raft—they'd drive spikes in a log and bind them together. Then he'd go down and get his chain and get the next raft ready. Had a little outboard motor to steer with. Had to keep in the channel and off the banks.

Walter said Triana had a boat dock at one time. The steamboat stopped there. The warehouses were still there in the 1930s. People took the boat to Decatur. The river was a key form of transportation.

## **Roosevelt and The New Deal**

**The “Pay on Demand” System.** Walter described the existing system of “pay on demand” that was in common practice prior to the New Deal:

Before the Roosevelt system took over, there was a thing called “pay on demand.” That meant that if you bought something, most people would pay for it in the fall. You could then pay what you had after the crops came in, which was usually only 2/3 of the amount. The next year they would demand for you to pay for the rest. No one usually had enough to pay for the rest of it, so you would lose everything. The banker's friend could then pay the rest of it and acquire the land. That was done with most of the land on Whitesburg Drive [the names of specific prominent people who acquired their land in this manner have been omitted].

Walter said, “Poor Whites and the poor Blacks were treated the same when it came to taking their land.”

**Loans for Tenant Farmers.** Walter said that when President Roosevelt's administration began in the 1930's, a goal was to find farmers working as tenants and “make them homeowners.” It was the “New Deal program,” and its purpose was “to get out of the depression the country was in.” The tenant farmers could get a government loan that had a 3 percent interest rate. If a tenant farmer showed prospect, the government would build a house for his family on government standards. Walter explained:

They would put in a chicken house, a corral, a half-acre for a garden, and an acre for fruit trees—peach, apple, and pear trees. The government would give you a three percent loan for everything, but you had to set it up to their standards.

Some of the big plantation owners didn't like it though, because they already had good tenant farmers living on their land, and they didn't want to lose their tenant farmers. You would have to get an application, fill it out, and get accepted, but you would have to keep it a secret from the plantation [where you were a tenant farmer], or you would have trouble before you could move. People like Tom Young and the Fleming Boys did not want you to take their tenants, so you had to find out what church they [the tenant farmers] attended and go talk to them there.

Walter gave an example of one such house that was built on the parcel shown as A-1 on the Army Real Estate Map. [Elnora Lanier described this house and said it was on the corner of Patton Road and Bob Wallace Avenue. The Army took that land in 1941, but it is no longer part of Redstone Arsenal.] Walter stated:

Elnora Lanier's daddy [Roosevelt Clay] owned it. It was a two-story house built according to the size family on FHA standard. They put out orchards, chicken house, barn, corral for hogs. When the Army took over the land, they used the existing house as offices and [the barn] as a riding stable.

### **Community Relations and Social Interaction**

**Youth and Informal Social Control.** Walter stated firmly: "You didn't do anything in the neighborhood. Anybody else saw you do something—your parents knew."

**The Community Bond.** Walter said in the community, friends and neighbors and relatives helped each other, especially the elderly:

Until Roosevelt, there was no Social Security. Everybody looked out for each other. You supported your elderly parents. Grandchildren (us) made the crop so Uncle [Buster] would have money. We took the crop to the co-op gin.

Walter mentioned earlier that when he and the other boys went fishing, they would take some fish home and then take some to elderly people.

**Interaction between Black People and White People.** In initial contact with the interviewer, Walter made statements about the racial prejudice he had encountered during his younger years when he lived in the Pond Beat community through the time he returned to the area and applied for work on the arsenal. In this case, his comments about occurrences that extended beyond 1941 were included because they had a bearing on his perspective of Redstone Arsenal. Most of those comments have been presented in previous sections in the context of the topic being discussed. Not included in this manuscript are his experiences as an industrial arts teacher at Council

High and the prejudices within the educational system because they occurred after 1941 and do not fit the time period of the pre-arsenal communities.

When asked at the end of the interview if he had any other comments that would provide an understanding of the social context of those who lived in the pre-arsenal communities, Walter commented strenuously about the absence of justice for Black people in the legal system. He said Black people had no recourse in either civil or criminal matters. Walter Joiner said that once he was talking with a lawyer he knew, Billy Johnson, and he told him that there had been no convictions of a White [person] crime against a Black [person] in the local area. Walter thought back and said this conversation took place in about 1971. He said the attorney doubted what he said and looked back through records. He couldn't find any cases of conviction.

Walter said a White man could shoot a Black man, and the law wouldn't even look into it. [One example of that was found in this research on RSA land.] He said that no court would convict a White man of a crime against a Black man (or woman).

The same was true for civil matters. He said Black people were not given receipts when they paid bills or mortgage payments and, as a result, were often cheated. He said that was how Connie Horton lost his land. In addition, Walter indicated that there was an unwritten set of rules that Black people knew to follow if they didn't want trouble.

In his description of buying the first school bus, it becomes apparent that Walter and others got around some of the rules sometimes, but also knew their limitations—they knew when going against the norm would be, to use understatement, “detrimental,” to themselves and to others. They bought the school bus under what were false pretenses, not because any false information was given, but because the White people who knew about it never imagined it was being bought for anything other than hauling Black workers to farms. They got around the insurance issue. They accomplished taking the youth from Pond Beat to Council School where they could attend the upper grade levels. When they were told by the White plantation owner in Whitesburg not to stop and pick up “his people” or the bus would burn, they did not. They knew their bus would burn—then no Black youth would be transported to Council School.

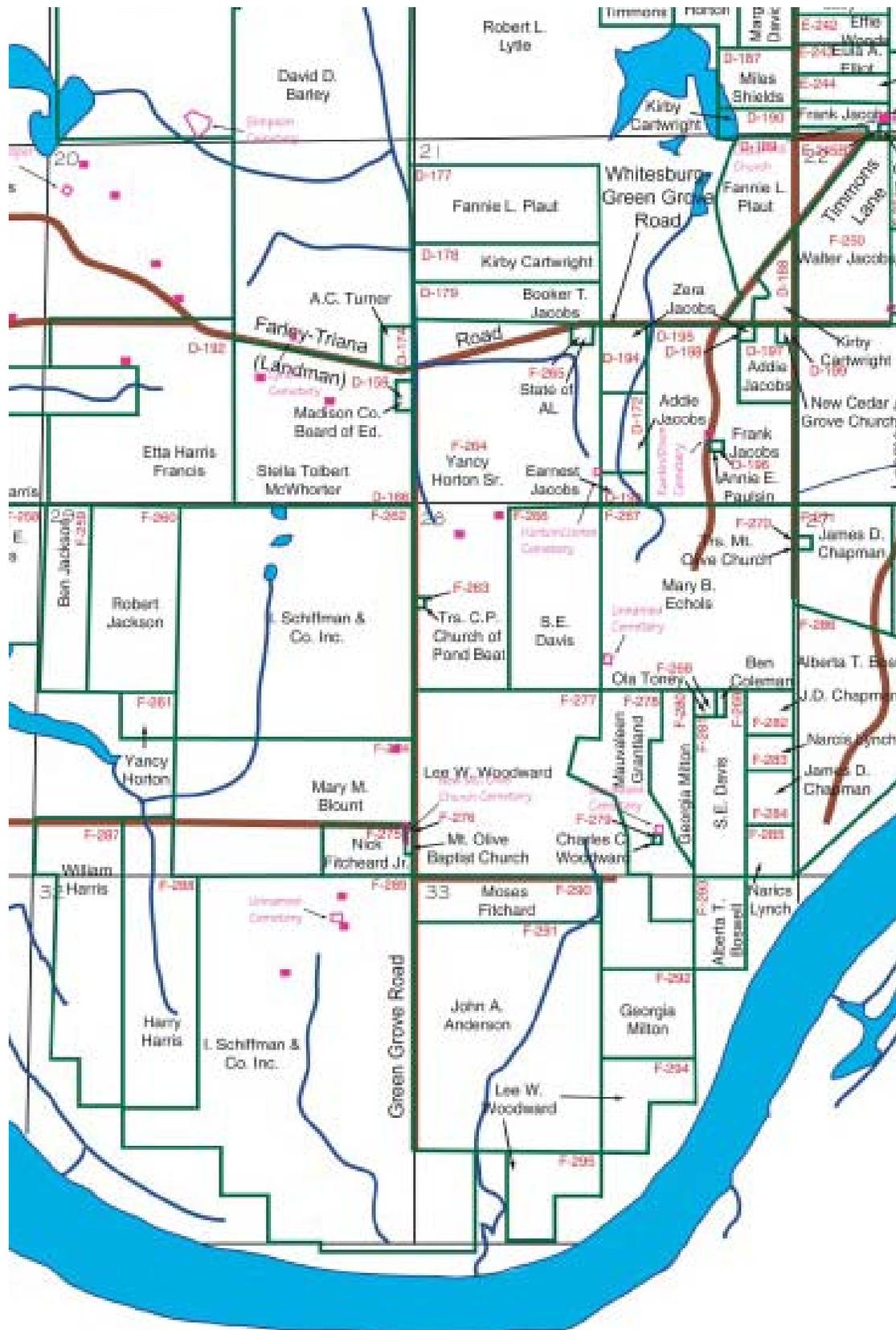
When the New Deal came, and dependable Black tenant farmers needed to be informed so that they could have the opportunity to apply for a loan, there was no doubt in the tenants minds that the typical White plantation owner did not want anyone to come to his plantation to talk to “his people.” He did not want to lose good labor. The tenant farmers [or day help] lived in his houses and were dependent upon him for all aspects of their livelihood. Talking to “his people” when he didn't want “his people” talked with was definitely against the rules. Breaking the rule would cause potential bodily harm to the intruder as well as censure to the tenant who listened. As a result, it seems an early example of the “networking” that is so touted today took place.

Black people from the other communities helped to identify a number of tenant farmers who would have high probability for success in getting a loan. Someone would ask around and learn what church that farmer attended. A Black man attending a Black church was not something that would stand out, so the target for the loan was informed about the opportunity during the course of a church service or event. Once the potential loan applicants were identified, the county agent would help to look quietly for a landowner who wanted to sell a large parcel that could be divided. It seems probable that having to conform to the rules of discriminatory social interaction resulted in increased cohesiveness in Black communities.

The researcher sensed that Walter expects prejudiced behavior from White people. He does have grounds to do that. The phrase “guilty until proven innocent” comes to mind. However, Walter’s comments also show that he has no problem getting along with White people who treat him fairly and with respect.

He seems to have a very high regard for Sam Harris, Sr. Walter explained how Sam Harris, Sr. had discretely, but regularly, given him rides to Huntsville on Mondays and from Huntsville to Pond Beat on Fridays so he could manage to stay with a relative during the week and go to school and then get home on weekends to tend to farm chores and crops. Then he mentioned his adult years when working as an engineer he had gone to the farm of the aging Sam Harris, Sr. at his farm on Bob Wade Lane. When one of the womenfolk had brought a plate outside for Walter to eat, the aging Sam Harris had said to take him to a table, that dogs ate standing up, not men. There was no doubt in the author’s mind that Walter Joiner felt more than respect for the White plantation owner Sam Harris, Sr.

Walter related another story of interaction. A White boy (Wilson’s son) he grew up with in Pond Beat saw him at a gas station across the Whitesburg Bridge in “gasoline alley.” The boy, now a man, was delighted to see Walter and put his arm around him in greeting. The man’s companion rebuked him for “hugging” a “colored man,” and the man explained to his companion that Walter was his old friend. Walter Joiner remembers the White boy who threw rocks at him from the bus. He also remembers the White boy who was his friend and is still his friend.



The central and lower area of Pond Beat. Source: Map prepared for the Army by AAC.

**JAMES LONG**  
(Interviewed in 2005)

James Long was born June 4, 1920. His mother was Emma Caudilla Poff, who was born in 1900. His father was Robert (Bob) Samuel Long. Most of his grandparents died at an early age. His father's mother was Mary Brown Long; she was half Indian, and her mother was a "full-blooded" Indian. James said she was close to 90 years old when she died, and he was a grown man, "married by then."

James said that when his grandparents left Limestone County, they came and rented the Timmons place. His mother (Emma Poff) was born on the Timmons Place in 1900. The family lived there about ten years. His grandfather had four sons (El, Ephram, Lawrence, and Lace) and two daughters (Emma and Leona, who married Sellie Hamer). Sellie drove a Coke truck. James Long has



**James Long as a boy.**



a faded photograph of the truck. Sellie was killed by a bale of cotton falling off a wagon.

## **The Area of Pond Beat Where the Longs Lived**

James Long was about six years old when his father moved the family to Pond Beat. His father, Robert Long, was the land manager for I. Schiffman & Co., Inc. The company owned a great deal of land. Landowners took out mortgages on their property during hard times, and when they could not meet their loan payments, the bank foreclosed on their property. It seems that Schiffman & Co., Inc. acquired most of their land holdings by buying the land that was foreclosed by the bank. The company owned two large parcels in Pond Beat that Robert Long managed at the time of the sale of the land to the Government. They are shown as Parcel F-262 and F-289 on the Army Real Estate Map. Managing the land included overseeing the tenant farmers and sharecroppers.

Parcel F-262 had a number of tenants. James Long described walking south toward the river from the Farley-Triana Road. Many of the people the researcher talked with referred to this road south to the river, but none, including Mr. Long, could remember the road having a name. The road is still there, identified on RSA maps as McAlpine and sometimes referred to as “the road down to the igloo area.”

The road and the people who lived along it have been discussed in other sections of this manuscript, including the interviews of Gene Neal, the Woodwards, Cleophus Lacy, and some of the Horton family members.

The “road to the river” came south from the Farley-Triana Road (Buxton Road) at what was Arthur Turner’s store, which is still remembered as the Woodward store by some old timers, even though Turner had it a good ten years before the Army acquired the land. Long, like most other people, said Charles Woodward owned the store; however, according to Woodward’s daughter, it was her mother, Charles’ wife, who owned the store. She ran it and he farmed. Long recalled the store being made out of rough lumber and having Cokes, flour, meal, pintos, canned salmon, sugar, coffee, ginger snap cakes and cookies in boxes. It didn’t have a refrigerator. In the winter they kept a little cheese. People had accounts at the store.

Long recalled both the Woodwards and the Turners living in the house to the west of the store, which he described as a long shotgun house, made of weatherboard painted white, and having about five rooms. He said in the years after the Army took over, that was right where little Vietnam was. Details about the house and store can be found in the interview of Arthur Turner’s grandson, Gene Neal.

As one turns off Buxton Road going to the south on McAlpine (the road down to the river), the parcel on the west side of that corner is shown on the Army Real Estate Map as being owned by Stella Tolbert McWhorter (D-165). Both James Long and Gene Neal mentioned the Tolberts. [Note: The 1930 census shows James McWhorter, age 56 as the head of household, with his wife being Stella McWhorter, age 50. Robert McWhorter (age 13) and Carl McWhorter (age 10) were listed as sons, as well as four children listed as step-children to the head of household (Joe Tolbert, age 19; Calvin Tolbert, age 15; Lida Tolbert, age 13; and Pauline Tolbert age, 10. The fact that two of the children named McWhorter and two of the children

named Tolbert were the same age suggests a combined family. Also shown as a member of the household was a brother-in-law, William Tolbert, age, 24.]

On a small piece of property that was like a small niche carved in the McWhorter property was what was by James Long as a Methodist church, which was for White people. James Long said Sam Harris, Sr. sawed the lumber for the church and neighboring men had come to help build it. According to Duncan Woodward, the church's congregation was sparse by the late 1930's, and it did not have a full-time preacher. The church is discussed in detail in the interview of Edith Woodward Price.

The Army Real Estate map shows a small Parcel (D-159) that appears to have been carved out of the parcel shown as owned by Stella Tolbert McWhorter (D-166). The Tolberts were White people. Parcel D-159 is shown as being owned by the Madison County Board of Education. None of the people from this area who were interviewed mentioned school ever having been held here. The White people from this area all stated they went to Farley School. The Harris family moved to Pond Beat in 1920; since it was said that Sam Harris sawed the lumber to build the Methodist church, the construction would have been after 1920. Deed research would reveal the date when the County Board of Education first had ownership of the tiny parcel.

James Long listed the property owners along the west side of the road, continuing south toward the river. Immediately south of what has been identified as Parcel D-166 (Stella Tolbert McWhorter), I. Schiffman & Co., Inc. owned a large parcel (F-262). Going south toward the river, Long commented about people who lived there. Shab Tolbert lived in a sharecropper's house and worked Schiffman land, then not far below him was Roy Hastings. About a quarter mile south of Hastings was "Old Buddy Clay." He was a Black tenant farmer. Buddy was deaf. He had his own mules. About a mile and a quarter below Clay was another tenant farmer, Loach Robertson.

South of where Robertson farmed was the Blount place (Parcel F-274). Long said the Blount house was built "old style." It was a square plank house. It probably had six rooms and had a tin roof. Blount farmed it. He had his own barns and a smoke house.

A little road came off the road south to the river (McAlpine), and went west along the south boundary of the Blount property for a short distance, and then, where the property extended further toward the river on its west side, the road cut through the Blount property. Nick Fitchard, Jr. is shown on the Army Real Estate Property Map as owning a small piece of property [F-275] bordered by Blount's property on the north and west and partially bordered by the road south to the river on the east. A small parcel (F-276) is cut from the Fitchard property where it borders the road.

Immediately beside the road, as if carved out of Parcel F-275 owned by Nick Fitchard, is Parcel F-276, the location of the Mt. Olive Baptist Church. A cemetery is on the east side of the church, which was shown on the Army cemetery maps made prior to this study as having the same name as the church. The cemetery name has been changed to Jamar Cemetery. This was initiated by Dr. Elnora Lanier, of the Clay family. Her mother is buried in the cemetery; she said it was known to the community as the Jamar

Cemetery. James Long did not know the name of the church or of the cemetery. In regard to the church, he knew only that “Black people went there.”

Parcel F-289 borders the Bount and Fitchard property to the south. At the time the Government took over the land, this was another parcel owned by the I. Schiffman & Company. According to James Long, this property had been taken over by the company during the Depression. [It has become apparent that Schiffman & Company, Inc. acquired a large amount of land during that period.] Schiffman & Company, Inc. probably once owned the land all the way to the river. The Woodward, the Penlands, the Harris family, and everyone else who owned property along the river lost it in a mandated sale to the TVA in 1935.

Since Robert Long was Schiffman & Company, Inc.’s land manager, he and his family lived in a large house on this parcel. James Long estimated about 29 sharecropper families also lived on the parcel.

### **The House Where the Robert Long Family Lived (Parcel F-262)**

James Long said:

If you were at the front door of our house, looking north, you could see a cemetery on a little hill. We were about 500 feet from the cemetery. We called it Owen Cemetery. There was a house between us and the cemetery. Will Rice lived in it. Then James King. He had the same kind of house as Will Rice. It was a plank house, and there was a smoke house and barn. Will had his own stock, smoke house, and barn.

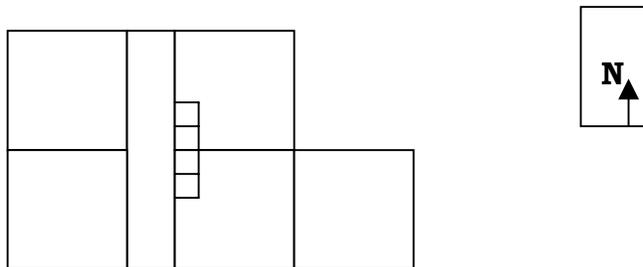
The house [the Longs lived in] had two stories and was built in 1855 by W. F. Owen, who owned it then. There was an engraving in a piece of glass that was up over the front door. Engraved in it was “W.F. Owen 1855.” His daughter married Darwin after Owen died, and moved in the house. Darwin didn’t know anything about agriculture. He put in pear trees, peach trees, apples, and plums. He had a cannery down there. Daddy saw it and knowed it. Most of the cans were about a half-gallon.

He went to Shipman and Goldsmith to pay off a debt. When the Depression came, in about 1930, they took over the land. They destroyed all the trees and put cotton in

James described the house they lived in as he remembers it:

The house had a big basement under it. It was a Colonial type house with round columns out front. The roof was tin.

[Can you describe the outside of the house?] It had yellow poplar weather boarding (overlapping planks) painted solid white. All the doors were mahogany. The front doors (north side) were double, and there was the glass up above them with the 1855 on it. The house had big windows. Stairs went up to the porch. When you went inside, you walked into a wide hall, which divided the house. The hallway was about 12 feet wide. The inside walls were plastered. The inside stairway went up to a landing and hall. The fireplaces went on up. Four bedrooms were upstairs.



Downstairs, the two rooms on the west side of the hall were used as bedrooms. Entering the house, the room off the east side of the hall was the living room. The dining room was directly behind it. The kitchen was built on the east side of the dining room, and was entered through the dining room.

Cooking was done on a Warm Morning stove in the kitchen. The Warm Morning was the best cook stove. It stood on legs, was white enamel and had a reserve on it to heat water. The top was solid and had “eyes” on it. These round eyes could be lifted out, and a pot could be set in the fire. The firebox was on the side. Most people bought their stove from Rex Harrison’s store on the corner of the square in Huntsville. It vented out through a flue.

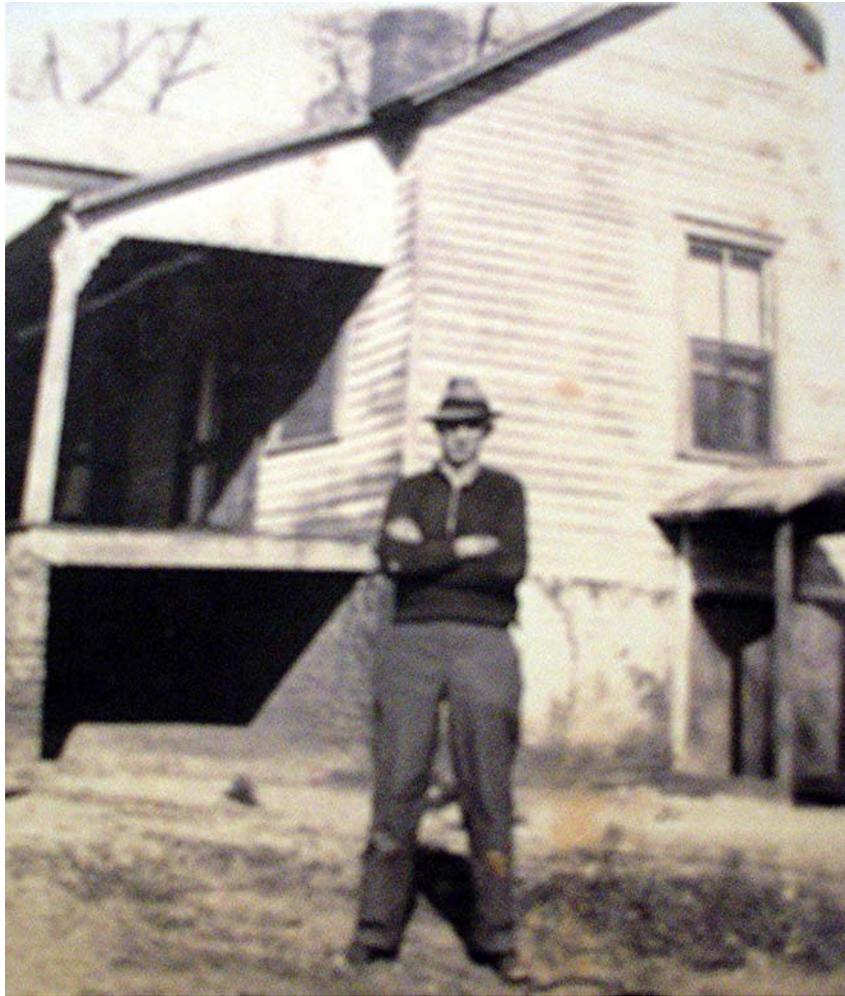
A long, glassed-in cabinet extended from the east wall of the dining room to the doorway to the living room. Beyond the doorway, was a fireplace; it opened to the kitchen on the other side of the wall as well. It was shared by the two rooms and “went on up,” as James Long said, to open on each side of the wall to the bedrooms above. On the other side of the hallway, the two downstairs bedrooms shared a fireplace built into the wall between them, and it, too, “went on up” to be shared by the two upstairs bedrooms.

The Longs had an icebox. It held about a hundred pounds of ice. The ice truck ran twice a week. In the summer time the ice lasted about four days. Sometimes they would buy a little extra to make ice cream. Long commented that the first refrigerator that made ice was run on coal oil, adding, “You could *smell* it!”

James said, “The back porch had steps up to it five feet wide.” The house had a big basement under it. There was a shed under the back porch, and a door to the basement. The door was on the east side. The basement had solid brick walls. James said you didn’t have to bend to enter, “You could walk right in.” James continued,

We had a chicken house and a smoke house, and a garage up front, to the side, where we put the T-model. The smoke house was behind the house, back from the southeast corner.

The chicken house faced the road. The smoke house was behind the chicken house. The chicken house had horizontal plank sides, like the house did, but James said on the chicken houses, “people didn’t strip the sides.” The roof was tin. The poles that held it up were shorter in the front, so the roof sloped down.



**The house where the Long family lived.**

Long said that the outhouse was south of the house, in a more direct line with the center of the house from the back steps. It appeared to be further away from the house than the smoke house. He said the outhouse was built out of the same wood as the house was (yellow poplar) and had a tin roof. It was a two-seater. When the hole filled up, they would move it. The researcher asked if they ever threw trash in it, and Long said, “NO,” looking at the researcher as if she had asked a silly question. He said they had toilet paper, but there was a saying, “She carried the Sears and Roebuck catalog [to the outhouse] and can’t read.”

The Longs got their water from a cistern:

We had a big cistern at our house. [Please describe it.] It had a hole, like a well. It was big around and had a concreted wall all the way down. Gutter water ran down into it. We took a bath in the water. We had a hand pump in front of the house. It was a deep well, hard to pump. We didn't have any electricity.

The Longs used oil lamps inside, but they also had Delco lights. James said they ran the porch light from the Delco battery. Yancy Horton also had Delco lights; it was reported that he used them for outside lighting and also for running equipment. Long said you could hear the "pat-pat-pat-pat" sound of the motor. It ran on gasoline and had a big flywheel on its side. The lamp was like a car had. The motor ran on gasoline. It had to be cranked to start it, and change its oil to maintain it. A wire was run to the lights.

Along the road in front of the house, the side of the road had been layered with rock to keep it from washing. Long said the WPA came in and built some with poured concrete. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) put in a lot of terracing. Some World War I soldiers worked at it. "We built headwalls. Where it [water] emptied into the road ditch, the rock was layered in the mouth." Evidence of this is still present today.

### **Crops and Sharecroppers**

James stated, "When you cleaned up the land, you'd build a house."

The typical sharecropper house had two rooms. Sometimes rooms were added. The first room entered was used as a bedroom. Behind it was the kitchen. If there was a chimney, it was in the bedroom. The kitchen usually a flue on the side, and the chimney pipe ran up it. If sharecroppers had a stove, it was a Black Diamond stove (cheaper model than the Warm Morning). Most sharecroppers had no screens in the windows, and they had no icebox.

Everybody had their own gardens and most people had a chicken house. Most women canned food in fruit jars. Many people had their own pig and cow for milk. Some people raised turkeys. Just a few raised them. You couldn't let them out. The little ones would drown when the dew was out in the morning. An old [Black] man would drive to the courthouse, heads [turkey] sticking out from the slats, and sell them.

Most people were sharecroppers and not tenant farmers. Somebody else took over the land if they lost it.

After 1927, people made a big crop and went out and bought automobiles. Then in 1928 the depression came. They sold or lost their automobiles or

put them in the garage. In 1929 the boll weevil came, and the price fell out.

Huntsville was a big mill town, so a lot of people went to town and got a job, but the mills didn't pay anything. Elmer Paris was one of the first to lose his job when the mill shut down. "Just let me move in the house, eat roasting ears, and pick peas, and I'll work for nothing," he said to my Daddy. "No, I'll pay you," Daddy said. He and his wife would be paid.

Outsiders came in and started to form a union. They ran every mill out of Huntsville but one, Merrimack Mills. It later became Huntsville Manufacturing. Labor got too high. The union got their way, and people lost their jobs; there was violence, strikes.

### **The Veterinary**

James Long said, "The vet, Dr. Steele, would come out to grind the mules teeth so they could eat better. The older they got [the mules], the longer their teeth, and they couldn't bite good."

### **Hired Help**

James Long said when it came time to pick the cotton, Robert Long would send someone to the mill village to get people to pick. They were paid so much a hundred pounds. They were taken back home at night. People who worked for Sam Harris, Sr. would be furnished so much to make a crop on. When they weren't making a crop during the winter, Harris would pay for work they did during the day.

### **Ferry Landing**

James Long stated: "A ferry landing was at Whitesburg Bridge. Old man Holt ran a ferry on this boat there."

Lehman's Ferry was on the river to the east of the Schiffman & Company property. Long recalled going there to get fertilizer:

The fertilizer came in on the barge in 200 pound sacks. People had to be there to pick it up. Rousters marched around and came out to where the wagons were, with bags on their shoulders, singing a song. From Charlotte and Nashville you'd get lime and most agricultural products.

When the researcher questioned, Long said the rousters were Black people and White people as well.

## Neighbors

Long said, “Yancy Horton was up close to the road (F-264).” Yancy’s property was bordered on the west by the road going down to the river (McAlpine) and on the north by the Farley-Triana Road (Buxton). Long went on to say that Ernest Jacobs, Frank Jacobs’ brother lived on the property east of Yancy (see Jacobs family interviews).

Long described Yancy’s house as weather board (overlapping planks), and said he had barns and other outbuildings and good looking mules. He noted that Yancy’s son Savoy wore shiny, high-topped boots and rode the best saddle horse. Yancy provided well for his family. Long commented:

We were taught to call all Black people older than us Uncle and Aunt. Yancy was on the board of the co-op. I saw him and said, “How are you, Uncle?” He said, “If I was your damn uncle, you wouldn’t claim me.”

When Yancy died, Savoy took the reins. By the time of sale to the government, the house was mortgaged.

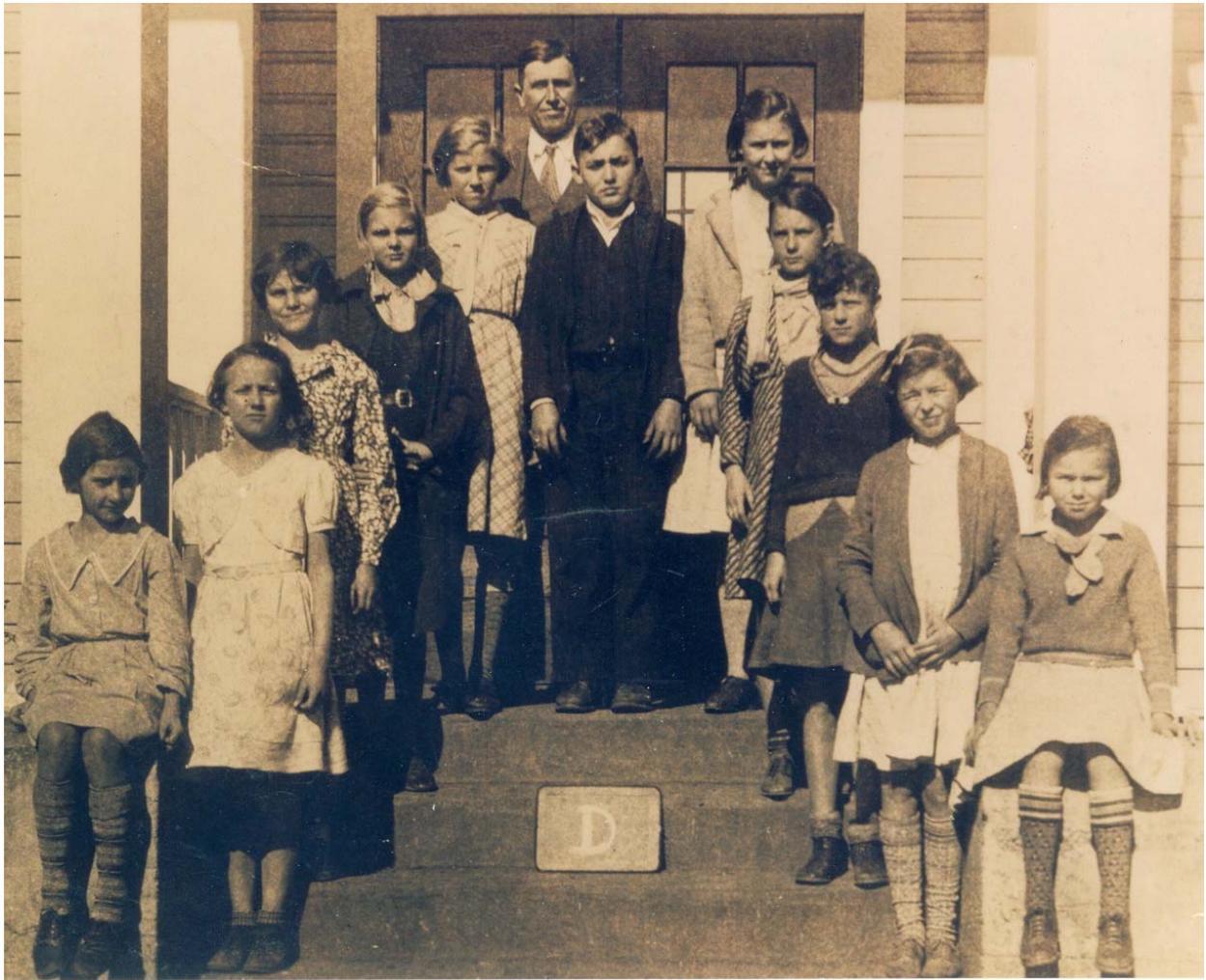
To the east, the neighbors were the Woodward. Details of the family can be found in the interviews of Edith Woodward Price and Duncan Woodward. Long commented:

Charles and Lee Woodward’s brother Jack was a fisherman. He moved out of there to Lacy Springs. He had a metal disk like on a turning plow. He’d come across in a skiff and bring you some fish. He’d put out trotlines. It wasn’t agin the law to use nets. They’d catch blue cat and buffalo. Daddy liked a blue cat that was about 8 pounds. Men built their own boats—skiffs. Cut it [tree] and have it sawed and let it cure and dry it and make the boat.

James Long knew Sam Harris, Sr. and his family well. He is quite knowledgeable about the property of Sam Harris and people who worked for Sam. Long’s comments that relate to Sam Harris are presented in the section about the Harris family, as they help to build the picture of the property, the people, and what took place on Parcel D-167 where Sam Harris, Sr. and his family lived.

## School

James Long went to Farley School, as did the other White children from Pond Beat. They caught the school bus. His father drove the bus. He explained that Farley School went up to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. After the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the students had to find their own way to Farley; from there they could take the bus to New Hope High School. James said that if those who had a ride to school would take other kids with them, the County Board of Education would pay them \$15. James remembered riding the bus with Duncan, Harry, and Edith Woodward, whose parents were Lee and Ruby Woodward.



**The Sixth Grade Class at Farley School, January 23, 1934. From the left, ascending the steps to the top: (1) Oletha Webster, (2) Vivian Fleming, (3) Bessie Tuck, (4) Margarita Hobbs, and (5) Mary Hall. The teacher, Roscoe Ivy, stands tall and center behind Mary Hall and James Long. On the right, descending the steps are: (1) Blanch Francis, (2) Margaret David Hobbs, (3) Mabel Webb, (4) Lucia Hobbs, and (11) Eva Jane Bell. [The names were copied from the back of the photograph.]**

## **The Doctor**

Long said:

Dr. Russell was at Harris house [prior to Harris purchase]. Mama said he kept medicine in the cabinet in the kitchen there. He made rounds from house to house on his horse. After selling the farm, he went to Huntsville. He was an old man when I was a little boy. Daddy was born in 1896, and the doctor was an old man. He doctored Black people and White people. Blacks in one place in Huntsville Hospital and Whites in another.

The Dr. Russell who James Long describes here would seem to be a different one than the Dr. Russell who Walter Joiner described as once having owned Timmons place and owning a hunting club (see Joiner section).

### **Mail**

James Long said that a mail rider came out from the Post Office in Farley.

**James and Margaret Long, 1939**



**ALTON E. ("GENE") NEAL**  
Interviewed in Feb. and Sept. 2005

"Gene" Neal



**The Family**

Alton E. ("Gene") Neal, born in 1929, grew up in the home of his maternal grandparents, Arthur Clayton (A.C.) Turner (born 1896) and Lucinda (Luci) Jane Ledbetter Turner. A.C.'s father, Jack Turner, who was from the Guntersville, Alabama area in Marshall County, was three-quarters Indian. A.C.'s divorced daughter, Ida Turner Neal and her four sons (Gene, Ernest, Bobby, and Billy) lived with her parents, as did her sister Vernelle. In addition, Gene said he had a cousin "from town," Bud Turner's son, who came out and stayed with them a lot.

A.C. Turner owned the grocery store in Pond Beat (Parcel D-174). Gene described A.C. Turner as a hefty-built man who was bald except for a ring of hair around his head. Gene said, "He raised us boys. Aside from the store, he rented bottomland, and we [Gene and his brothers] farmed it. We shared the profit. We were boys, but we worked hard." [Gene's mother moved from the household before Gene was grown.]



Ida Turner Neal

**The House and the Store**

**Location.** Billy Neal said the store was where the Range House on McKinley Range is. James Long described the location as being where "Little Vietnam" once was, prior to McKinley Range.

The store on Parcel D-174 was initially owned by Ruby Eslick, the wife of Lee Woodward. Mrs. Woodward was the proprietor of the store for many years; her husband farmed. They lived in the house to the west of the store until the property was sold to A.C. Turner in the early 1930's when they moved down to the John Woodward house. Before A.C. Turner bought the store, he lived down close to the river.

Gene didn't know if his grandfather had owned the property where he'd lived previously. He did recall that it was on the west side of the road, and they turned off on a lane to reach it—it was not near the road. The Madison County, Alabama General Highway and Transportation Map prepared by the State Highway Department in 1937 shows two different lanes going west from the road going down to the river (now McAlpine Road).

Gene described his grandfather's property as being a 40-acre farm, with a house, barn, and store. They grew cotton on the farm. Gene said: "The store was right along the road. The house was about 200 feet west of the store, and then the barn was west of the house." He added, "They [the Army] tore the porch off the house with a bulldozer before we moved out, making the road. The store was already gone [demolished by the Army]."

## **Description of the House and the Store.**

**The House.** Gene said A.C. Turner's house was wood frame with drop siding. It had a tin roof, was painted white, and had both a front porch and a back porch. The house had 'about five rooms' and no central hallway. The smoke house was behind it. The well was behind the house. A big garage was behind the house on the right (east) side. The garage was made of rough boards.

**The Store.** The store was one room with a storage room off to the east side, about midway to the back of the store. The structure was about 20 feet wide by about 50 feet long. That was Gene's guess. "It was built up on stilts because it flooded down there." The house was on higher ground than the store. "You'd go up the front steps—it also had back steps." He said it seems like he remembers the front being higher than the back, because he doesn't remember the steps in the back "going as high up as the ones in the front."

Asked what type of things the Turners sold in the store, Gene said bologna, cheese, canned stuff, dried beans, overalls, and denim shirts. A.C. Turner bought his produce from Lee W. Woodward. Groceries were bought from "the wholesaler," in Huntsville, which was Ragland Brothers. Gene said his grandfather had a Model T Ford truck, and they went to town (Huntsville) to pick up the groceries. Then, in later years, Raglands started to deliver. Gene said his grandfather also had a "gas station." He said:

The gas pump was out front under a tin canopy. We sold kerosene also. The gas pump was a two-way pump—a backwards and forwards pump. A globe was on the top. It held at least five gallons. The globe filled and then the gas would flow down into the car.

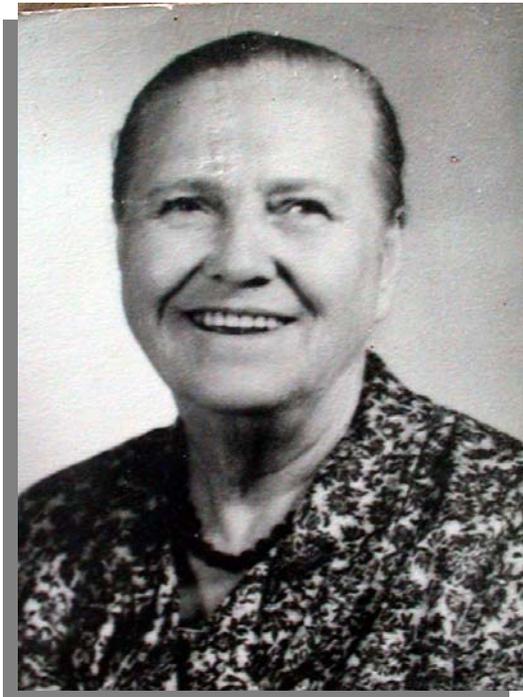
A driveway went up between the house and the store. The garage was at the end of the driveway. The outhouse was "over behind the house." The store shared that outhouse.

## **Daily Life**

**The Household.** Gene said that Mae King cooked for the family. The kitchen in the house beside the store ran the width of the house and had a twelve-foot-long table. The kids sat on tapered potato baskets, and the grown-ups sat on chairs.

According to Gene, Mae King was a big woman. Apparently she ruled in the kitchen. Gene stated, "You wouldn't dare go in the kitchen between meals, or she'd tear you up." Mae was more than the cook. Gene said, "She was our Black nanny. She could sit and rock you or she could beat your butt—whichever came in handy." Mae King was the wife of James King. [James Long mentioned a James King living just north of him.]

Luci Turner had a gasoline-operated washing machine. It had a one-cylinder engine. After the clothes washed, she cranked them through a wringer and rinsed them in a tub. She had two rinse tubs. The washer was in the garage.



Luci Turner canned fruits and vegetables and, after the hogs were butchered, she canned sausages. Some of the sausage meat was smoked in bags. Gene couldn't remember how she did the bags, but he said they were "flattened down."

As was common in that day, Luci Turner had a big iron pot outside. She used it for rendering fat when the hogs were butchered. She also made lye soap in the pot.

**Farming.** Gene Neal did not recall who owned the bottomland that his grandfather rented for him and his brothers to work; but he gave directions to it, going south from the store toward the river.

**Lucinda ("Luci") Turner.**

Gene said:

The bottomland we worked was on the right side as you went south toward the river. We turned in to the right on a road to the field. There was a pond along that road. We used to back the wagons off in the pond to let the wheels swell up.

[Why did you want the wagon wheels to swell up?] So the wheel would hold the track [a steel band] on. The wheels were wood and they would shrink when the wood dried up. The tracks would come off if you didn't keep the wheels swelled up.

[What did you do about meals?] Sometimes we'd cook them down there, and sometimes somebody would bring us food. Sometimes we camped out down there. We'd sleep on the ground sometimes and sometimes in the wagon. Wherever we passed out [because we were so tired].

**School.** Gene and his brothers went to Farley School. The school bus came by their house. Gene said the bus was a Dodge with a wooden body and canvas roll-up windows. Duncan Woodward said the bus was a Ford; however, Duncan was speaking of the first school bus that he ever rode, so the Dodge may have come after the Ford. Gene's first grade teacher was Lilly Gardner.

**Recreation.** Gene said he and his brothers worked--there wasn't much recreation. His grandfather rented land and the boys farmed it, sharing the profit. Gene stated: "Grandpa always gave us a list of what we had to do that day [each day], and if we didn't do it, he'd get the switch out. We planted, cultivated, and followed the mules—they were our farm equipment. We hand picked cotton." He didn't recall where A.C. had the cotton ginned.

At home, they listened to a battery-operated radio. Gene said: "We didn't go to town much. We were working people." Sometimes he went in the Model-T truck with his grandfather when he bought supplies for the store in Huntsville.

**Neighbors.** Gene said, "Frank Jacobs lived near the road (there was a dirt road going south by Frank's to the east of McAlpine) in a big house. I think it was two-story." This was Parcel D-195. Gene stated:

The Tolberts lived on the south side of the road and the Barleys lived on the north side. The Tolberts [who were white] had one of those houses with a hall in it and two rooms on each side [dogtrot type]. There was no other house on their property. They farmed it. No neighbors were between.

The Barleys were colored. They were nice people. They had an old frame house. It burned and they built a new house. It was a big one-story house with drop siding. They had some big barns. May King lived where we lived.

### **A.C. Turner Measured the Rise and Fall of the River**

James Long said that he remembered Arthur Turner used to "walk down to the Tennessee River and write down how much the river rose and fell and mail the figures to the TVA office in Knoxville." He said Turner went down and measured all through the summer and winter.

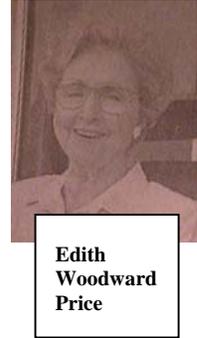


**Alton "Gene" Neal  
died in the Spring  
of 2007.**

**Alton E. ("Gene") Neal during his years as a Huntsville police officer.**

## **THE WOODWARD FAMILY (PARCELS F-277, F-279, F-294 AND F-195)**

This section has three parts: (1) The history of Woodward family and the land ownership of family members, (2) The remembrances of Edith Woodward Price, and (3) The remembrances of her brother, Duncan Woodward. The research for this section began with a telephone interview with Edith Price in April of 2005.



When asked about farming activities, Mrs. Price said her brother had been involved in that and would remember more about it. Duncan Woodward provided a man's perspective of the day and times. However, some questions about the property ownership remained unanswered, such as, how Charles Woodward came to own only a very small parcel of land on the southern boundary of Woodward Cemetery.

Seeking more information that would shed light on the Woodward family, who were members of the Pond Beat community at the time the land was sold to the government, the researcher turned to the cemetery research notes of John P. Rankin. The research he has completed on the Woodward Cemetery takes the Woodward family back to the first ownership of land by a Woodward in Madison County and allows the construction of a more complete picture of the family of Edith and Duncan.

### **A HISTORY OF WOODWARD FAMILY LAND OWNERSHIP**

{The material in this section was drawn from the research notes of John P. Rankin, compiled on CD under the title The Cemeteries of Redstone Arsenal. In many places the material was taken verbatim. However, as John's notes and documentation are extensive, the researcher edited in some places, and, in others, has extracted the portions that focused on the Woodwards who lived on arsenal land, omitting information about those who did not. In some places, the author has added comments of her own. His research notes have been used with his express permission.]

#### **The Earliest Burials of Woodwards on RSA (The Woodward Cemetery)**

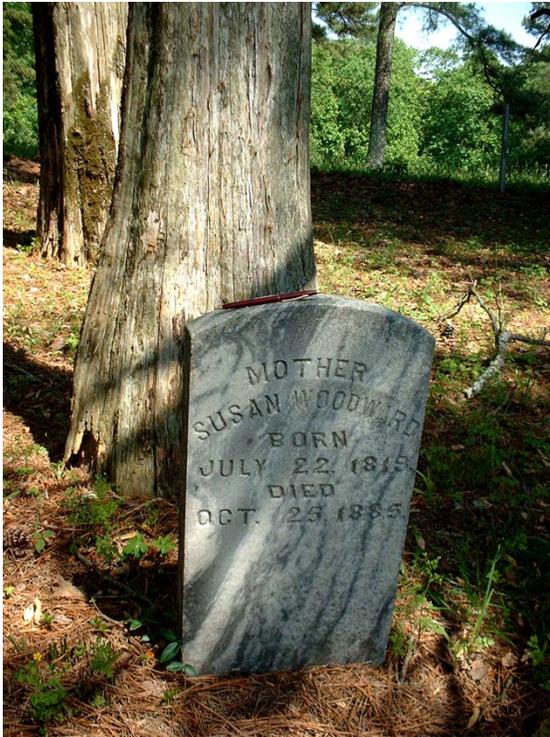
**Location:** The Woodward Cemetery in the SE ¼ of Sec. 28, T5S, R1W. This is part of RSA Test Area 5, and the cemetery is located in a field about 150 yards south of Building 8875, and a bit west and north of the southernmost part of Pershing Road.

The Army Real Estate Map documenting land owners/parcels at the time of the sale to the government shows that Woodward Cemetery was a small parcel of land bordered on its south side by an equally small parcel of land owned by Charles Woodward (F-279). These two small parcels are surrounded by Parcel F-278 shown on the Army Real Estate Map to be owned by Mauvaleen Grantland.



The Woodward Cemetery.

Photographs by John P. Rankin, April 28, 2003.



**Inscriptions indicate the earliest burials were Susan and Eugene C. Woodward in 1885.**

The dates in the inscriptions on the monuments of Susan and Eugene C. Woodward show that both of them died in October of 1885. Eugene was an infant, only 7 months old. He was, however, not a son of Susan, who was too old to have been his mother. Susan was probably the grandmother or great grandmother of Eugene. It is possible that they had a common contagious illness of the time that caused the deaths to be in close time order.

## **The Woodward Family was Present in Madison County in Early Times**

The Woodward family was present in Madison County in early times. There was a notice in an early Alabama newspaper that Charles C. Woodward was postmaster of "Woodwardville" in Madison County in 1842, and both the 1850 and the 1860 census records for Madison County show Eli and Hannah Woodward in the same household. Eli was shown as age 50, born in Tennessee, in the 1850 record, while Hannah was shown as age 74, born in North Carolina. The 1860 census showed Eli as age 60, born in Tennessee, and Hannah was listed as age 87, born in South Carolina around 1773.

Eli and Hannah were among the pioneers of the area, with Hannah most likely being the mother of Eli. Moreover, according to their ages, Eli could have been a brother of the 1842 postmaster Charles C. Woodward and of John S. Woodward. John S. Woodward, born in Tennessee in 1813, appears in the 1850 census as the father of a family that included John W. Woodward (born 1853) by the 1860 census, after John S. Woodward had died. John W. Woodward lived on the pre-arsenal lands and eventually owned the area where the family cemetery is located.

However, the only Madison County government land patents in the Woodward name were taken by Eli and by Wilson Woodward. The private land transaction deed and mortgage index by G. W. Jones Inc. shows no Woodward land acquisitions in the area where the cemetery is located on Redstone Arsenal until 1905.

The fact that the Woodward family was burying members in the cemetery on what is now RSA many years prior to 1905 suggests they lived there before they owned the land. They may have been sharecroppers, farming the land for others until they could afford to purchase it. The census records show their presence in the area among known landowners in that section, township, and range in 1860, when Susan Woodward appeared as head of a household with children. Susan's children who controlled the land and are known to have lived in the area afterward were Charles C., John W., and Clinton C. Woodward. Their neighbors in the 1860 census included Nancy T. Graham, Margaret L. Fynch/Finch and plantation owner William H. Timmons.

The 1850 census of Madison County also shows a Woodward family in the area. The family was headed by John S. Woodward, shown with wife Susanah (Susan). Marriage records of Madison County show John S. Woodward married Susan Bell in June of 1840. This indicates he left Tennessee, the state of his birth and moved to Alabama by 1840.

In the 1880 census, Susan is listed as head of household again, with sons Clinton, John, and Charles shown at ages that match the 20 years from the 1860 record. Yancy Horton is living nearby; the census sheet shows that it was for Township 5, Range 1W, which is the general location of the Woodward Cemetery. The census records were inconclusive for exploring Susan's Bell family origin. However, her sons Clinton and John Woodward both married Bell girls, and there were only a couple of possibilities for the right Bells in the 1880 census records. Her son Charles C. Woodward on 1/11/1882 married Bettie Butcher, a cousin of a neighbor in the 1870 census.

**Excerpts from the 1880 Madison County Census.** Source: Taken from the 1880 census as found in the "FAMILY SEARCH" Family History Resource File CD-ROM set produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints for the 1880 census. [Note: John Rankin has inserted relevant comments by some of the entries. The type font has been changed for the notes so they stand out for the reader's attention. The entries include additional names other than those of the Woodward family as they reveal names and information about others who lived nearby in the community and have been discussed in other sections of this manuscript.]

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 135D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Jackson Q. JIMAR</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>AL</b>
Wuis JIMAR	Wife	F	M	W	28	AL
Ida JIMAR	Dau	F	S	W	9	AL
Clarence JIMAR	Son	M	S	W	6	AL
Anna JIMAR	Dau	F	S	W	1	AL

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Census Place: Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 135D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>John W. MORTON</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>AL</b>
Margaret MORTON	Wife	F	M	W	31	AL
Nina MORTON	Dau	F	S	W	8	AL
Pearl MORTON	Dau	F	S	W	6	AL
Robert MORTON	Son	M	S	W	5	AL
Virginia MORTON	Dau	F	S	W	3	AL
Caroline FIELDS Alabama	Cook	F	S	MU	20	AL

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 135D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>John SHEFFIELD</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>MU</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>AL</b>
Amanda SHEFFIELD	Wife	F	M	MU	39	AL
Yancy HORTON	SSon	M	S	MU	19	AL
Virginia HORTON	SDau	F	S	MU	15	AL
Celia HORTON	SDau	F	S	MU	13	AL
Everett HORTON	SSon	M	S	MU	12	AL
Paris HORTON	Son	M	S	MU	4	AL
Ida SHEFFIELD	Dau	F	S	MU	9M	AL
James GILBRETH	Nephew	M	S	MU	15	AL
King GOODLOE	Blacksmith	M	M	B	55	AL

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Census Place: Township 5, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 135D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Susan WOODWARD</b> (Nee BELL; widow of John S. Woodward)	<b>Self</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>AL</b>
Clinton WOODWARD (On 10/21/1881 married Carrie BELL)	Son	M	S	W	30	AL
John W. WOODWARD (On 11/22/1882 married Sallie BELL)	Son	M	S	W	27	AL
Charles WOODWARD (On 1/11/1882 married Bettie Butcher, cousin of a neighbor)	Son	M	S	W	25	AL

Census Place: Township 5, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 135D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Lottie BELL</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>AL</b>
Lizzie BELL	Dau	F	S	B	19	AL
Wheeler BELL	Son	M	S	B	17	AL
Lottie BELL	Dau	F	S	B	5	AL
Zora BELL	Dau	F	S	B	1	AL

Census Place: Township 5, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 135D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>William JIMAR</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>AL</b>
Louisa JIMAR	Wife	F	M	W	31	AL
Lillie JIMAR	Dau	F	S	W	2	AL
Susan OWENS	Mother	W	W	67	AL	
Bettie BUTCHER	Cousin	F	S	W	31	AL
<b>(On 1/11/1882 married Charles C. Woodward two households above in the census)</b>						
Charlotte MATHIS	Cook	F	M	B	30	AL
Vergil MATHIS	Farmhand	M	M	B	35	AL
Austin OWENS	Farmhand	M	W	B	80	AL
Annie OWENS	Farmhand	F	S	B	12	AL

Census Place: Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 135D

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>John TRAVIS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>MS</b>
<b>(Signed as co-bondsman for John W. Woodward when JWW married Sallie Bell)</b>						
Mary TRAVIS	Wife	F	M	W	36	AL
<b>(Nee Woodward; child of John S. &amp; Susan Woodward; a sister of John W. Woodward)</b>						
Helen TRAVIS	Dau	F	S	W	10	AL
Bula TRAVIS	Dau	F	S	W	5	AL

Census Place: Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254021 National Archives Film T9-0021 Page 136A

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Peter JIMAR</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>TN</b>
Caroline JIMAR	Wife	F	M	B	46	AL
Lily JIMAR	Dau	F	S	B	15	AL
Mary JIMAR	Dau	F	S	B	12	AL
Thomas JIMAR	Son	M	S	B	10	AL
Albert JIMAR	Son	M	S	B	12	AL
Lanson JIMAR	Son	M	S	B	8	AL
Liddie JIMAR	Dau	F	S	B	5	AL
Everett JIMAR	Son	M	S	B	2	AL
Jennie CAMPBELL	Servant	F	M	B	37	AL
Sophia LOGAN	Servant	F	S	B	13	AL
Bettie LOGAN	Servant	F	S	B	12	AL
Ann LOGAN	Servant	F	S	B	10	AL
Dick LOGAN	Servant	M	S	B	7	AL

Census Place: Township 6, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254022 National Archives Film T9-0022 Page 350A

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>Mary DICKSON</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>AL</b>
Mattie DICKSON	Dau	F	S	W	18	AL

Josie DICKSON	Dau	F	S	W	16	AL
E. E. DICKSON	Dau	F	S	W	14	AL
V. L. DICKSON	Dau	F	S	W	12	AL
M. S. DICKSON	Dau	F	S	W	10	AL
John C. DICKSON	Son	M	S	W	8	AL

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Census Place: Township 6, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254022 National Archives Film T9-0022 Page 350A

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>J. M. HOBBS</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>AL</b>
M. M. HOBBS	Wife	F	M	W	19	AL
L. D. HOBBS	Dau	F	S	W	10M	AL
C. L. DAVID	Sister	L F	S	W	17	AL

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Census Place: Township 6, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254022 National Archives Film T9-0022 Page 350A

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>David GARDINER</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>SC</b>
A. C. GARDINER	Wife	F	M	W	58	SC
T. P. STOYNER	Dau	F	W	W	29	AL
L. B. STOYNER	Dau	F	S	W	8	AL
J. A. STOYNER	Son	M	S	W	5	AL

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Census Place: Township 6, Beat 6, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254022 National Archives Film T9-0022 Page 350A

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>W. E. LEMLEY</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>AL</b>
Sarah LEMLEY	Wife	F	M	W	32	AL
E. K. LEMLEY	Son	M	S	W	10	AL
A. F. LEMLEY	Son	M	S	W	8	AL
O. A. LEMLEY	Dau	F	S	W	4	AL

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Census Place: Township 6, Beat 6, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254022 National Archives Film T9-0022 Page 350A

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>D. C. GARDINER</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>AL</b>
Alice M. GARDINER	Wife	F	M	W	20	AL
C. F. GARDINER	Son	M	S	W	1	AL
Carrie BELL	Cousin	F	S	W	16	AL
<b>(This could be the Carrie Bell who married Clinton C. Woodward, 10/21/1881 in Madison County, Alabama – the only one found to fit at all.)</b>						
Hannah BELL	Servant	F	W	B	60	TN
Moses WALL	Servant	M	S	B	19	AL

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Census Place: Township 6, Beat 6, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254022 National Archives Film T9-0022 Page 350B

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>A. GARDINER</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>AL</b>
Mary GARDINER	Wife	F	M	B	23	AL
George GARDINER	Son	M	S	B	3	AL
Pilot GARDINER	Son	M	S	B	1	AL

Census Place: Township 6, Madison, Alabama

Source: FHL Film 1254022 National Archives Film T9-0022 Page 352A

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
<b>J. R. BELL</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>AL</b>

N. R. BELL	Wife	F	M	W	32	AL
S. E. BELL	Dau	F	S	W	4	TN
E. O. BELL	Son	M	S	W	2	AL
R. A. BELL	Dau	F	S	W	2M	AL

The 1890 census was accidentally burned. The 1900 census shows John W. Woodward, his wife Sallie, and their 9 living children. The 1910 Madison County census record for the family of John W. Woodward does not show Charles and John living in the household. The census records indicate Sallie had a total of twelve children; nine were living at the time of the 1910 enumeration. A check of the children's names (for those young enough to still be living at home with their parents) indicates that son Paul had died between 1900 and 1910. His tombstone shows that Paul died in 1906.

Even though John's son Charles Woodward was not found (anywhere) in the census records of 1910 and 1920, it is probable that he is the Charles Woodward who is listed in the 1930 census of Madison County AL. He was enumerated with his wife Laura and his daughter Vivian in the Whitesburg Precinct 6, "off Green Grove Road". This location places him at the ancestral home site on pre-arsenal land. Charles is listed in 1930 as a farmer, age 43, married at age 24, born in Alabama of parents who were both born in Alabama. Laura D. Woodward is given as age 35, married at age 17, born in Missouri of parents who were both born in Missouri. Their daughter Vivian was listed as age 12.

Vivian Woodward, the only child of Charles and Laura, was raped and murdered in Huntsville in 1936 at the age of 19. She is buried in Maple Hill Cemetery, as are both of her parents, who divorced after her murder. Both later remarried to others and lived elsewhere. Apparently, in death the family wanted to be together again at last. The second spouses of Charles and Laura are not buried in Maple Hill with them.

The land index by G. W. Jones, Inc. shows that by 1912, James Chapman had acquired a portion of the land around the cemetery from John W. Woodward and his wife Sallie. Less than a year later, John W. Woodward was deceased.

**Note:** The researcher talked with Evelyn Darwin by telephone in August of 2005. Evelyn Darwin is the widow of Tyler Darwin. Mrs. Darwin voluntarily brought up the subject of the book about Vivian Woodward's murder. Mrs. Darwin said Fred Simpson interviewed her husband extensively for an entire day to learn the details of the Woodward girl's murder in Huntsville during the cotton mill days. After the book was published, Simpson brought her a complimentary copy. The story of Vivian's rape and murder, as well as the resultant trial and execution of a perpetrator, can be found in Fred Simpson, *Murder in the Heart of Dixie*, published in 2003. The Woodward story is told on pages 55 – 83.

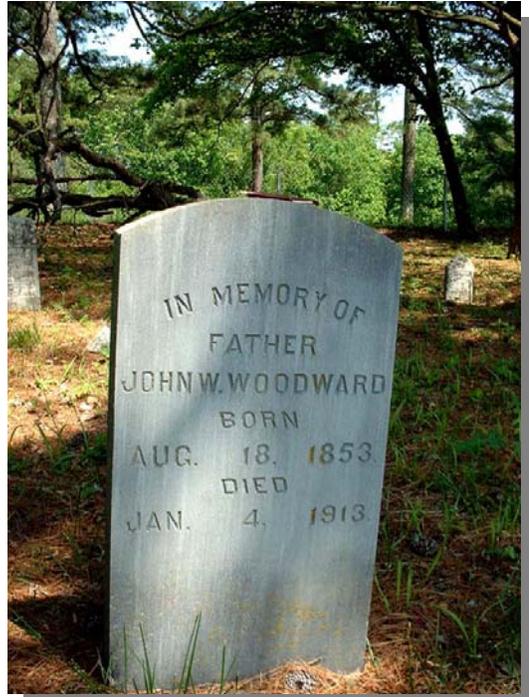
By the time of the 1920 enumeration, John W. Woodward had died. Sally was shown as a widow living in a Meridianville household headed by her widowed daughter, Edna Darwin. While all of the census records show that John W. Woodward was married to "Sallie," the probate records after his death consistently referred to his widow as "Emma." Sallie's full name might have been Sarah Emma Bell Woodward. Later pages

show the 1917 Probate Record Book entries for the deceased John W. Woodward. The possessions listed in probate give insight about farm equipment that was on the farm as well as financial circumstances.

In the 1930 census, John (“Jack”) Woodward, the twin of Charles, born in 1889 as shown in the 1900 record, was living on the pre-arsenal lands where the family cemetery is located. Also in 1930, Lee W. Woodward (a son of John W. & Sallie) born in 1898 per the 1900 record was enumerated as living in the Lincoln Village (cotton mill) area. Lee later became the owner of the land around the Woodward Cemetery, when his siblings converted their interest in the property to him in 1935.

No stone in the Woodward Cemetery has an inscription that is more recent than the one on the monument of John W. Woodward, who was interred in 1913.

**John W. Woodward (1853-1913). Woodward Cemetery. Photograph by John P. Rankin.**



## **THE DARWINS AND THE WOODWARDS**

In a telephone discussion with Evelyn Darwin, she explained to the researcher the relationship of Tyler Darwin to the Woodward family who lived on pre-arsenal land. Evelyn Darwin stated that Tyler Darwin, who died in his 80’s, was the son of Edna Woodward, of the Woodward family who lived on the land that was to become RSA. Tyler’s father (Edna’s husband) was Jeff Darwin.

Jeff Darwin died in 1918 during the great influenza epidemic. Edna Woodward Darwin lived to be 101. She died January 28, 1989 and was buried in Maple Hill Cemetery. However, Evelyn Darwin said the family still considers the Woodward Cemetery on RSA to be “theirs.” She said she intended to visit it soon, if her son would escort her there.

Evelyn Darwin told both John Rankin and the researcher that the local Darwin families are descended from the famous Charles Darwin, who proposed the theory of evolution. She stated that he was a religious man who had sons in Christian ministry.

The information John gained about the marriage of Edna Woodward and Jeff Darwin is interesting to note when considering property ownership and the pre-arsenal community

of Pond Beat. A map of Madison County compiled and drafted by G.W. Jones, C.E., dated June 1909, shows the Darwins and the Woodwards were neighbors.

In 1909, the property on the west side of the southern end of what is now called McAlpine Road (shown on some old maps as Green Grove Road) was owned by Mrs. George Darwin. The property was bounded on the south by the Tennessee River and on the west by an inlet of the Tennessee River. Annie Jamar owned a very narrow strip of property between the inlet and the river—it was taken (its sale required) by TVA.

The property on the other side of the road, to the east, was owned by the Woodwards. C. (Charles) owned the parcel along the road north of where the property of J.W. Woodward began. J.W. (John) owned a parcel along the road to the south of that, and J. and C. Woodward are shown to own the eastern parcel that extended to the river; thus, the Tennessee River formed the southern and eastern boundaries of the Woodward property.

Mrs. Darwin was no longer the owner of that property at the time of the sale of the land to the Army, and the land was no longer in the Darwin family. I. Schiffman & Co, Inc. had purchased a large amount of land due to owner bankruptcy, and they owned the land shown on the 1909 map as belonging to Mrs. Darwin, including a parcel extending across the road to the east once owned by J.W. Woodward. The I. Schiffman & Co. Inc. property being discussed here is Parcel-F-289 on the Army Real Estate Map. A section of the 1909 map has been reproduced below to illustrate the Darwin and Woodward ownership. It shows the land of William Timmons (the Timmons Plantation) which was mentioned earlier.

The parcels owned by the Woodwards in 1909 that were still owned by the Woodwards in 1941 were: Parcels F-277, F-294, and F-295 owned by Lee Woodward, and the small parcel by the Woodward Cemetery, F-279 owned by Charles Woodward.



Excerpt from 1909  
Madison County map  
drawn by G.W. Jones

STATE OF ALABAMA,  
MADISON COUNTY

TO HONORABLE THOMAS W JONES, JUDGE OF PROBATE HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA,

We the undersigned commissioners appointed to set apart the homestead as follows:

We have decided to set apart the dwelling and appurtenances, thereof, and thirty acres, (30A) of ~~land~~, lying across, the front or south end of farm, as follows:  
Beginning at S E Corner and running 60 rds, north along line, thence N 80 rods, toward W line, thence S 60 rds, to S line, thence E 90 rds, to point of beginning, leaving a right of way 1 1/2 in width, along W line and containing 30 acres. This is based upon the belief, that the farm is 81 rds, in width running S and W should this not be true, then 30 acres is set aside running across the front or south side, leaving a right of way 1 rd wide, along the west line. This 28th day of June, 1917.

Respectfully submitted  
J B Fisk,  
H A Bobo,  
F M White

Sworn to and subscribed before me  
this June, 28, 1917. Thos W Jones, J P C

MAD. Co. AL  
Probate Record Book 48  
Pages 57-58 (1917)

STATE OF ALABAMA,  
MADISON COUNTY,

To J B Fisk, H A Bobo, and F M White, Appraisers having been heretofore appointed by this Court to set apart and allot to Emma Woodard as widow, of J W Woodard, deceased, the homestead, exemptions allowed her as such widow, and it appearing to the court from the report filed by said appraisers that the homestead of said decedent, exceeds in value two thousand dollars, you have been appointed Commissioners to set off and allot by metes and bounds the homestead exempt to said Emma Woodard, as such widow.

You will regard both the quality and value of said real estate and the selection of the widow, and include the dwelling and appurtenances.  
You will within ten days after setting apart said homestead make return thereof in writing in this Court.

If the homestead after being reduced to its lowest practicable, area still exceeds two thousand dollars in value thereby rendering it impracticable, to allot and set it off you will report that fact to the court.  
This June, 26th, 1917

Thos W Jones, Judge of Probate

Filed June, 28, 1917

Thos W Jones, Judge of Probate

STATE OF ALABAMA,  
MADISON COUNTY

PROBATE COURT

In the matter of the Estate of J W Woodard, Deceased, to Hon Thomas W Jones, Judge of Probate, We, the undersigned appraisers of the estate of J W Woodard deceased, appointed by your honor on the 15th day of June, 1917, respectfully report that after being duly sworn according to law, in obedience to the Commission herein annexed have this day set apart and allotted to Emma Woodard, the widow and minor children of said deceased the property of said decedent under sec 2072 of the code and additional personal property, under sec 2073, of the code estimating the same at its appraised value to-wit:

to cash, 46.95 two mules, 220.00 one horse Jeff, 125.00 one brown, filley, 100.00 one cow and calf, 55.00 one cow, 40.00, one brindle heifer, 30.00 1 yellow heifer, 20.00, 7 red hogs 101.00, one cultivator, 60.00, one wagon, 50.00 one buggy and harness, 60.00, one horse John, 50.00 one mower 15.00, one drag harrow, 10.00 one disc harrow, 10.00, one corn sheller, 5.00, 5 rd field wire 47 in, 2.50. Amount carried forward, 1000.45

We also report that the said decedent, occupied by him, at the time of his death, exceeds, in value \$2000.00 all of which is respectfully, submitted this 23rd day of June, 1917.

J B Fisk,  
W N Farrell  
W F Evans, Appraisers  
J A Galloway, J P.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this June, 28th, 1917

Filed June 25th, 1917

Thos W Jones, Judge of Probate

STATE OF ALABAMA,  
MADISON COUNTY

PROBATE COURT

In the matter of the Estate of J W Woodard, Deceased, To the Hon, Thomas W Jones, Judge of Probate,  
The following is a full inventory of all the goods and chattels, money books Papers and evidences of debt of the decedent, except the specific personal property exempt from administration under section 4199, of code to widow and minor children two mules, one filley, two horses, two cows, and two two year old heifers, and one calf, seven head of hogs, two buggies and harness, one manure spreader, one cultivator, one disc harrow, two turning plows, one mower and rake, one cotton and corn planter, two two horse wagons, one set of blacksmith tools, one section section harrow, cash 324.65

J M Andrews, Note mtg. 42.50

J B Woodard Adm

John W. Woodward. Madison County Probate, 1917, Book 48, p. 57.

STATE OF ALABAMA,  
MADISON COUNTY

I J G Woodard, administrator of the estate of G W Woodard, deceased being duly sworn makes oath that the foregoing made by me is a full inventory of all the goods and Chattels, money books, papers and evidenced and debt of the decedent at the time of his death, except the specific personal property, exempt from administration under section 4199 of code, to his widow, and minor children, that has come to my knowledge and possession

J G Woodard,

Sworn to and subscribed before me

This June 1, 1917.

Thos W Jones, Judge of Probate.

Filed June 1, 1917

Thos W Jones, Judge of Probate

PROBATE COURT

STATE OF ALABAMA,  
MADISON COUNTY

In the matter of the Estate of J W Woodard, deceased, To J B Fisk, W N Farrell and W F Evans, At a Probate Court held in and for said County- on the 1st day of June, 1917, you were appointed appraisers in for the personal property, of J W Woodard, deceased, this is, therefore, to authorize and require you to appraise the said estate, and reduce said appraisement to writing and return to said court, duly sworn and subscribed by you, within two months from this date.

Thos W Jones, Judge of Probate.

PROBATE COURT

STATE OF ALABAMA,  
MADISON COUNTY

In the matter of the estate of J W Woodard, deceased, To the Hon, Thos W Jones, Judge of Probate. Following is our appraisement of the personal estate of the above stated deceased.

cultivator, 60.00, manure spreader, 75.00, new wagon, 50.00, old wagon, 10.00, new buggy and harness, 60.00, old buggy and harness, 5.00, one brown horse 7 yrs old, 125.00 one brown filley 8 years old, 100.00 one dark brown horse, 50.00, one bay Jennie mule, 110.00 one sorrel Jennie Mule, 110.00 seven hogs, 101.00 one brindie heifer, 30.00 one Jersey heifer, 20.00, one Jersey Cow, 40.00 one Jersey cow and calf, 55.00, one cotton and corn planter, 5.00 one mower, 15.00, one hay rake, 5.00, one set blacksmiths tools, 30.00, one post hole digger, 1.00, 8 bu cotton seed, 3100, one drag harrow 1075.00 Two double shovels, 3.00, two turning plows, 7.00 one corn sheller, 5.00 one corn scoop, 75, 60 rd of filed fence 36 h in mesh 6 in, 24.00, one baston harrow, 2.00 one disc harrow, 10.00, one pea dropper, 1.00, 5 rd 47 in filed fence in 6 mesh 2.50.

June 15, We J B Fisk, W N Farrell, and W F Evans, has set aside 143 bu Corn and 139 that for the widows, supports, We also claim that real estate is worth more than \$2,000.00

STATE OF ALABAMA,  
MADISON COUNTY

We J B Fisk, W N Farrell, W F Evans, duly appointed to appraise the personal estate of J W Woodard, deceased, being duly sworn do depose and say that the foregoing appraisement is true, correct and impartial and unprejudiced appraisement made by us, of all the several articles of goods and chattels, specified in the inventory of the personal estate of said deceased, or that have come to our sight or knowledge that we have personally examined each article and appraised the same, according to our best skill and judgment as it is true value, and have placed such value in figures and cents opposite each article,

J B Fisk,  
W N Farrell,  
W F Evans, appraisers  
J A Galloway, J P

Sworn to and subscribed before me this June, 16th, 1917

Filed June 16th, 1917

Thos W Jones, Judge of Probate

Huntsville, May 9th, 1917

This is to certify that I have this day nominated and appointed my father P T Sitz to be my guardian. This June, 9th, 1917

Turney Sitz

Before me A C McCown, Justice of the Peace Turney Sitz appeared and signs her name to the above, appointment of guardian.

This 11day of June, 1917.  
A C McCown, J P

Witness  
W A Speck

Filed June 12, 1917

Thos W Jones, Judge of Probate

MAD. Co. AL  
Probate Record Book 48  
Pages 57-58 (1917)

## **EDITH WOODWARD PRICE**

Interviews April and Sept. 2005

### **Edith Woodward's Family**

Edith Woodward was born in 1924. Her mother was Ruby Eslick, who was born July 24, 1898, in Lincoln County, Tennessee. Ruby died in 1945, just a few years after they left Pond Beat.

Edith said her father, Lee Walston Woodward, was born about the same year as her mother. He was born in the area that was known as Pond Beat prior to the government purchase of the land. Her paternal grandparents were John Woodward and Sally Bell Woodward. Her Grandfather John Woodward is buried "up on top of the mountain" in Woodward Cemetery on Redstone Arsenal. The people who lived there in pre-arsenal days called that mountain **Bell Mountain**. This is a fact to remember when talking with the generation who lived in Pond Beat.

### **Where They Lived**

Two properties will be discussed here. The first is the property owned by Edith's mother, who had both a home and a store. Edith's parents lived in a house by the store and then later lived in the "homeplace," which Edith called her Grandfather John's house.

**The House by the Store [Owned by Lee's wife, Ruby Eslick Woodward].** Before moving to the Woodward homeplace to live, Lee Woodward and his wife Ruby lived in a house west of the store on Parcel D-174. Ruby ran the store and Lee farmed. She sold the property, which included the house and store, to A.C. Turner, who owned the property at the time of sale to the government. A discussion of the store is presented in the interview of Gene Neal, who lived with his Grandfather Turner. Edith was very young when she left that residence and had waning interest in describing it. She was not pressed to do so since the researcher could already picture the store and house, based on Gene Neal's interview.

The one remembrance volunteered by both Neal and Edith Woodward was of the times when high water came up to Parcel D-174. Edith said, "The house wasn't far from the store, but sometimes when the water got up so bad, we went from the house to the store in a boat. The house was on higher ground; the store was on stilts. Sometimes the water got so high we couldn't get to Huntsville. That was seldom, but it happened."

**The Woodward "Homeplace."** Edith said when her grandfather died, he left his property to several of his children. One of his sons had been killed in World War I. Her father bought out the others and became the owner of the property. She said her Uncle Jack lived close to the river on "our" property. The house he lived in was not large.

Edith gave directions to the Woodward “homeplace” of Grandfather John Woodward (Parcel F-277) in the community of Pond Beat:

Coming in from Whitesburg Pike [traveling south], which is now named Memorial Parkway, turn right on what is now Buxton Road. Go six or seven miles, and then make a sharp left turn by a Methodist Church [the church is no longer there. [The current name for the road south is McAlpine.]

Go a mile or a mile and a half down toward the river. It was about half way between the river and the store [the store was on Parcel D-174, at the intersection of what is now Buxton Road and McAlpine Road]. Turn left on a lane. Our house was off the road. The house was up a little hill. The hill was right in front of the mountain. The Clays lived on the other side.

Edith stated that the Army built an igloo right where the Woodward homeplace had been.

### **A Description of the John Woodward House**

Grandfather owned the homeplace before I was born. It was a four-room house. It faced the road. [The lane that came off the main road.] There were two doors on the front, but we didn’t go in through the front. Two bedrooms were in the front. The one on the right was larger than the other one. Each of the two front bedrooms had a fireplace.

The two rooms in the back were a kitchen and a dining room. The kitchen had a wood stove. One side of the stove had a big tank to heat water. Up above the front of the stove was a place where you could put the food, just to put it away out of sight. When I got up to a pretty good size, we got a refrigerator that burned kerosene. Before that, my daddy brought home ice every time he went out.

The dining room had once been used as a bedroom. There was a Warm Morning heater in it.

### **Daily Life (when her parents lived in the “homeplace of Grandfather John”)**

**The Well.** The well was down the hill from the house. “Every bit” of the water used at the house had to be carried in buckets up the hill from the well. Beyond the well, “you started up the hill—the mountain started.” The cemetery is up on that mountain.

**Electricity.** Edith said there was no electricity down there “on the homeplace.” Her family used kerosene lamps. When her father’s sister married a man on Moore’s Mill Road, he had Delco lights. She said, “We thought Delco lights were wonderful.”

**The Women's Work on the Homeplace.** Edith recalled tasks that were done.

**Washing Clothes.** Edith said:

The washing place was away from the house, down by the well. A black pot was down there by the well. When Edith's mother was ready to wash clothes, her father built a fire under the pot. The clothesline was down there. They carried the clothes back up to the house to iron. When they were ready to iron, they set the flat irons on the stove to heat.

**Canning and food.** We had a big vegetable garden. Mother canned lots of fruits and vegetables. Edith said:

We had pigs. Mother canned sausage. She made patties and cooked them before putting them in jars. She would pour some of the fat and hot water in the jar with the sausage patties. You could also put the sausage in a bag [home sewn bags] and hang it in the smokehouse. Everybody had a smoke house.

Mother raised chickens. We had everything in the world there was to eat.

**Farming.** Edith said her father, Lee Woodward, got the land from his father John. He raised cotton and corn, no tobacco. He had a tractor and a mule. She said her brother could tell the researcher more about the farming.

**Tenant Farmers.** Edith said:

Father had tenant houses on his land. The tenant houses were about a quarter mile away from ours. Most of them were log houses with two or three rooms. There were not a lot of them. They were south of our house, toward the river. Their families and my brother worked the fields. Mother wouldn't let me.

[Do you remember any of their names?] I only remember Mandy, who had a daughter my age; her name was Viola. When I was a young child, the only playmate I had was the little colored girl Viola. We played together all the time. I used to go to their house sometimes. Mandy helped mother a lot on washing and ironing days.

Viola came to see me since I have lived here. It had been so many years. I didn't recognize her. Then she told me who she was. [Edith couldn't remember Viola's last name or how to contact her. Edith seemed like she had been very pleased by the visit.]

**Other Neighbors.** Edith said:

The neighbors were not really close. The McWhorters were not as close as the Longs. They [the McWhorters] had a daughter Inez and two sons. To go to their house, coming in [the road that is now Buxton], you would pass the road where we turned south, past the Methodist Church. If you didn't turn south, and were going west, on the right was the Barleys and on the left was the McWhorters.

Most people today of younger generations than Edith who did not grow up in farming communities would not think of the McWhorters as neighbors. The McWhorters were white people who lived on Parcel D-159, which was across the road from the house Edith lived in with her parents when her mother owned the store [D-174]. Since most of Edith's remembrances relate to when she lived on Parcel F-277 (the Woodward property), it seemed possible she was thinking of the McWhorters as neighbors from when she lived across the road from them, however, this consideration was dismissed, because Edith, at the same time, had mentioned the Long family. It is reasonable to suggest that "back then," in farming communities, the concept of "neighbor" encompassed a greater amount of distance away than it does today.

The Long family (James Long interview) lived on Parcel F-291, owned by I. Schiffman & Company, Inc. James Long's father was the company's land manager for Parcel F-291, and the house where they lived was in what is now the igloo area, on the west side of what is now McAlpine Road, south of Nick Fitchard's place (Parcel F-290). James is contemporary in age to Edith.

The Barleys lived on Parcel D-173, which is a large parcel that forms the western and northern boundaries of the small parcel where her mother's store and house was (Parcel D-174, owned by A.C. Turner at the time of the sale of the land to the government). Edith spoke highly of the Barley family. She said: "They were the most unique Black people in the community. They were really light and the most educated."

When asked about Black neighbors who might have lived closer to the Woodward house, Edith said Buddy Clay was a name she remembered. She said he was also "well to do" and she thought he owned his land. Their house was off the road a bit.

**Church.** The community church for white people was the Methodist Church. It was located on Parcel D-159, which is shown on the Army Real Estate Map as being owned by the Madison County Board of Education at the time of the sale of the land to the government. The small parcel appears to have been "carved" from the one owned by the McWhorters (D-166). It was on the south side of the road coming in from Farley, across the road from the store, which today is the southwest corner of the intersection of McAlpine Road and Buxton Road.

Edith said the sanctuary wasn't very big. The Sunday school rooms were off to one side in the back. Edith said she couldn't remember how many rows of pews the church had;

she guessed 15, saying “but that may not be accurate.” She said the church was small, but a good size for its day, because churches were small back then.

She said the church had wood benches, not solid wood like they are today. She thinks the seats and backs may have been wooden slats, but she can’t remember for sure. To the side of the pulpit was a choir loft with five or six rows of benches.

The only preacher Edith could name whom she remembered preaching there was a man named Pharr. She said, “I can remember him because he stayed with us; he had a wonderful personality. He was an evangelist, not the regular preacher.” She couldn’t remember a regular preacher.

**School.** Edith Woodward remembered:

During school [when it was in session], we got up in the wintertime and put on long stockings, a skirt, and a sweater. Girls didn’t wear pants then. I went to the lower grades at Farley School. Then, I rode a bus to New Hope to high school.

The first school bus I rode was black with seats down the side. The middle one had no back [it was a bench]. The windows were canvas and fastened down

**Hunting.** Edith said she didn’t remember her father hunting much. They sometimes had squirrels and quail to eat.

**Christmas.** When asked for a memory of Christmas, Edith said:

For Christmas, the last one I remember when I was a child, I received a Shirley Temple doll. All the family came to our house. We had a big garden [so many canned fruits and vegetables]. We had fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, and lots of other dishes.

**Family Gatherings.** Edith said:

In the summertime the Woodward kids, all raised there [at the Woodward homeplace], came home on Sunday sometimes. My aunts and uncles and all their kids. Mamma had to cook all the food she could get her hands on. They would all go hiking up the mountain and get hickory nuts, lots of them. [Were there any homes on the mountain?] No.

**Crossing the River.** Edith said that people who lived in Pond Beat could cross the Tennessee River east of what is now Memorial Parkway. They could get a ride across in a skiff for 10 cents. At Ditto, “there was a white [man] who had a ferry on both sides of the river.”

**Social Interaction.** Edith commented:

People were different back then. People had an understanding. Blacks respected how to live. They were friendly, but didn't cross the line. They didn't want to. They had their own church. My brother and I went to a revival there. We were just kids. I don't know how mother let us. Maybe she didn't know.

## **DUNCAN WOODWARD**

**(Born in 1921)**

**Interviewed Sept. 2005**

As stated previously, Edith Woodward suggested the researcher call her brother Duncan, saying he would probably remember more about the land and farming than she did. When the researcher called Duncan Woodward, he mentioned during the conversation that he was over 80 years old, and he'd just returned from a trip to Tennessee, so he was tired. Therefore, the researcher asked specific questions and did not dwell on topics she had covered with Edith.

### **Duncan Woodward Talks about Farming**

Duncan said Charles and Lee Woodward were brothers. He could remember that Charles lived "down there" (east of McAlpine Road) at one time. They bought the others out and then Lee bought him out. Lee bought the "upper land."

**Lee Woodward Grew and Sold Produce.** On the upper land, Duncan helped his father to raise cotton and corn and enough vegetables to take to Huntsville to sell. The Woodwards later had Woodward Produce, a store in Huntsville. Duncan said his father passed away before that.

**The Cotton.** Duncan said, "We took the cotton to Triana. We'd take the road up to Sam Harris' place and then the road came back around to Triana Village, not as far up [north] as Merrimac was. The Sam Harris mentioned by Duncan would be Sam Harris Sr. His father, J.B. Harris (and later he), owned Parcels D-167 and D-191. His home was on Parcel D-167, on the north side of what is now Buxton Road (the old Farley-Triana Highway).

**The Barleys Had a Cane Crusher.** Duncan said his father raised a small patch of cane:

He raised just enough [cane] to have molasses for the family. Barley used to have a molasses crusher, and my father took it up there. Barley was on the main road, as you pass the grocery store, it was the next farm.

[Where was the crusher located on Barley's land?] The crusher was not far from the road, near the back part of the house. It was about 200 yards from the road to the house.

It has been established that the store was Parcel D-174 and the large parcel owned by the Barleys, shown on the Army Real Estate Map as Parcel D-173, bordered what was then called the Farley-Triana Road (now Buxton Road).

**The Sharecroppers.** Duncan said the sharecroppers lived on the upper farm. He is probably referring to Parcel F-277 since Edith mentioned sharecropper houses on the parcel where the old homeplace was. Duncan said:

There were two sharecropper houses; they were cabins. [Did they have floors?] Yes, they had wooden floors. The houses didn't have any amenities; they were kind of pitiful.

**Blacksmith.** Lee Woodward went to the blacksmith in Farley. The blacksmith's name was Jack Turner, and he was located close to what is now the intersection of Buxton and Memorial Parkway. To reach his shop, one would have come out the Farley-Triana Road (Buxton), turned south on Whitesburg Pike (Memorial Parkway) and continued to the south about two blocks. Duncan married the blacksmith's sister, Katie. She was from Hobbs Island.

## Daily Life

**The Outhouse.** Duncan said:

Behind our house we had a good-sized garden fenced in, and there was a gate in the back. We'd go out through the garden gate to get to the outhouse. It was a two-seater.

Duncan didn't remember the outhouse ever being moved or cleaned out. He said, "We dug a big hole under it." When asked if his father might have put lime in the outhouse, Duncan pondered, and said he seemed to remember that his father had done that. Talking about the outhouse brought the Farley School to Duncan's mind.

**The School.** Duncan said he went to Farley School, and "we had a **big** outhouse outside behind the school; it had an awful smell when you went in." Duncan continued,

The first school bus I remember riding on went down into Pond Beat. You'd get on the back of it. It had a canvas curtain on each side of it. The sides were wood. Wood came up so far, then there was like a long window [no glass] that had a canvas curtain that could be rolled up or down.

The bus would go so slow you could get out and run along beside it. It wouldn't blow your hat off because it didn't get up enough speed. It was a Ford. I was born in 1921, and when I was about 6 or 7 years old I started school and rode the bus. They'd let us off two or three weeks during the cotton-picking season.

When asked if they had desks at school, Duncan said they did.

Duncan, as well as his sister Edith, went to high school in New Hope. Duncan would drive himself and his sister from their home to the blacksmith's shop, leave his car, and from there they would ride a school bus to New Hope.

**The Church.** Having discussed the school, Duncan stated that there was a church (Methodist) in Pond Beat across from the store (the church was on Parcel D-159; it was discussed earlier). He said his family often went to the church in Farley. When asked why they went there instead of to the church that was closer, Duncan said, "There wasn't enough white people there to attend and make it interesting. There was no full-time preacher."

Duncan said his mother drove them to the church in Farley. His Sunday school teacher there was Lilly Latham. He said that she was a great lady and, in later years, the church on Weatherly Road was named after her.

To get to the church on Farley, Duncan said they would come out the Farley Road (now Buxton) to Whitesburg Pike (now Memorial Parkway) and go south. The school was on the right, and the next intersection after the school, we'd turn left and go a half-mile or more. These instructions can be followed today since the current Farley School was built on the site of the original one.

## **The Depression**

Duncan said:

The depression days, 1930 to 1935, were really some hard times. My family did fairly well because we had all that land. We didn't get much for cotton and corn, but we sold vegetables. We took them to Huntsville to cafes and small grocery stores. If we didn't sell out, we'd go into villages and go door-to-door selling.

**WALTER HOLCOMB** (born 1928 or 1929):  
**An interview by Skip Vaughn**

Walter Holcomb was interviewed 1980. The interview was printed in the *Redstone Rocket*. The Holcomb family lived in the Pond Beat community. Holcomb discusses the family farm, hunting, going to school, and being first “displaced” by TVA in 1937 and then being “thrown off” their land by the Army in the fall of 1941.

The text of the article written is presented verbatim below.

**Walter Holcomb. Standing beside missile test equipment that is located where his family lived before the Army took possession of the land in 1941. Source: *The Redstone Rocket*, July 2, 1980.**



**“Water plant worker lived on farm here,” *The Redstone Rocket*, July 2, 1980.**

Walter Holcomb was 12 years old when the Army came. For him it was a good time. The surveyors, construction workers and their big machines were quite a sight for a country boy whose family got around in a horse-drawn wagon.

The coming of the Army also gave him a chance to pick up a little spending money by selling coffee to the men building the big water treatment plant on the river bank about a quarter of a mile from the family farm.

Today, Holcomb works at that water treatment plant. He can step outside and almost see his old home place, which is

now inside Test Area 1 on the northeast corner.

Back then the community was called Pond Beat, a name that designated a voting district.

Holcomb’s father, William Holcomb, had 80 acres and with a wife and six kids raised milk and beef cows, pigs, and cotton, corn and other cash crops.

They lived in a two-story log house heated by four fireplaces.

He remembers that his parents “weren’t happy, but they took it real well” when the Army made them move. It was the

second time the government had forced them to relocate.

They had moved to Pond Beat from Guntersville. “It displaced us in 1937 when TVA backed “ the water up”, said Holcomb, “and we were thrown off here four years later”. The family moved on to Sand Mountain.

Holcomb said the land transaction was made in summer of 1941 but the family was allowed to stay until fall and make their crop while surveying and construction went on “before they run us out”.

“They tore up some of our crop”, he said, while a railroad from the river was routed through their barn.

Holcomb said the area was excellent farm land. Floods were a problem for farmers near the river and they always planted so they could harvest early in the event of a fall flood.

He attended school and church in Farley, seven miles away via the Farley-Triana Road. There was a small grocery store on the road. [This would have been the store first owned by the Woodwards and then the Turners.]

A state bus provided school transportation but the Holcomb family got around in a rubber tired wagon. They used it for shopping trips to old west Huntsville and the town square.

“There wasn’t a lot down in this area. Fishing, hunting, trapping—that’s what I enjoyed most and spent most of my spare time doing”, Holcomb said.

“It was illegal but I sold a lot of wild game—squirrel, quail, etc. to the

construction workers. I hunted the whole river bottom to Indian Creek at Triana. It was illegal to hunt the TVA strip but our old tree dog didn’t know where the line was and we just followed him”, said Holcomb with a laugh.

Once, he remembers, “wardens were hiding in the trees waiting for us to come. They ran us a quarter of a mile before we lost ‘em in a briar patch”.

Fishing was “real good in Indian Creek and the river. Trapping was too. “I trapped the river bottom and the creek—mostly coon, muskrat and mink. There was a lot of mink here then”, said Holcomb.

He said there was a swimming hole, big oak tree and swing where the boat slip is now by the military recreation area.

Holcomb said he never envisioned coming back to work at the water treatment plant he’d watched being built as a boy. He went to work there in 1959, after six years in the Air Force and “making quite a few miles before coming back here.”

**Note:** It is possible that Holcomb’s family leased their land as the Holcomb name was not found on the Army Real Estate Map.

## **ELNORA CLAY LANIER**

A few years ago, Dr. Elnora Lanier telephoned the Redstone Arsenal Cultural Resource Manager (CRM). She wanted to obtain permission from the Army to put a monument on her mother's grave. Since the researcher was interested in meeting people who had ties to the former arsenal communities, the CRM asked her if she wanted to follow-up on the call. Thus, the researcher telephoned Dr. Lanier, and they agreed to meet for lunch.

### **Changing the Name of a Cemetery**

During lunch, the researcher learned a bit about Elnora's family on the arsenal and about the cemetery. Elnora is the daughter of Theodore Roosevelt Clay, Sr. and Bennie Lacy. Elnora said the Army had put up a monument at the cemetery with the name New Mount Olive Cemetery on it. She said this was not the correct name for the cemetery. The name should be corrected to Jamar Cemetery. She wished to put a stone on her mother's grave there. Her grandmother was a Jamar. She said New Mount Olive was the correct name for the church that had been beside the cemetery; however, the cemetery was not associated with the church.

[The request for a change of name of the cemetery name was submitted to the Army, and the change was made to Jamar Cemetery. This is the cemetery listed in the *Cemeteries of Madison County, Vol. 1* (1971) as Moore Cemetery and denoted as "Colored".]

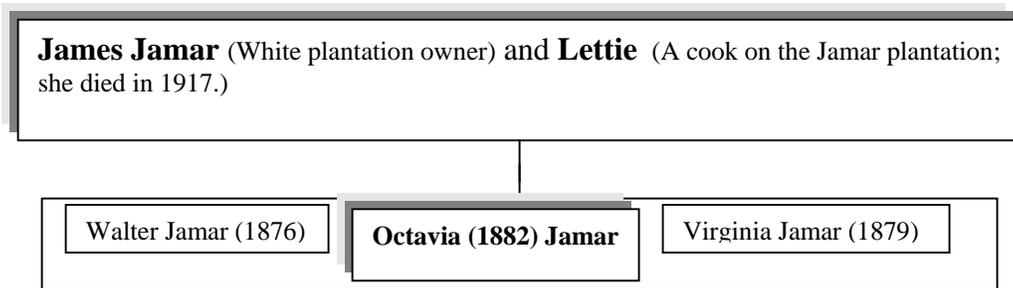
### **Introducing the Jamar/Clay Family of Pond Beat**

The researcher has drawn from her conversations with Elnora, and the submission of Dr. Theodore Roosevelt Clay, Jr., to *The Heritage Book of Madison County* to introduce the Jamar/Clay family who lived in Pond Beat. In writing the story, the researcher has drawn diagrams to illustrate the "family tree" of Elnora Clay Lanier.

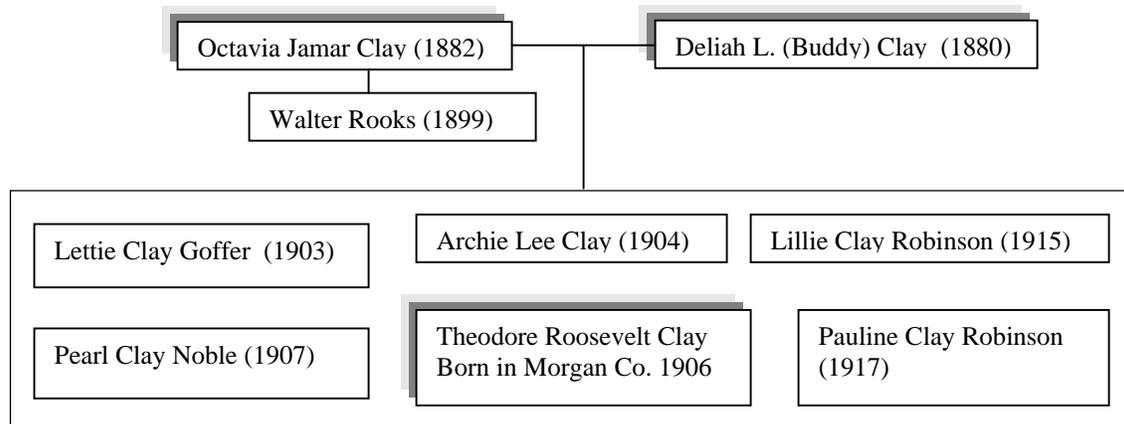
Elnora's paternal grandparents, Octavia and Deliah ("Buddy") Clay, lived in Pond Beat on the land of Schiffman & Co., Inc. Buddy Clay and Octavia Jamar were married in 1901. Apparently, Elnora's grandfather, Deliah Clay, was not fond of his first name. He was known as "Buddy," and he signed his name D.L. Clay. Buddy Clay was born in Decatur in Morgan County. He was the third son of Winne Draper Clay and Wash Clay. [The Clay's other children were Cutchie, Ella, Dock, Gurtee, and Emmit.]

Elnora's grandmother, Octavia Jamar Clay, was the daughter of Lettie, who served as a cook on the plantation of James Jamar. Lettie had no last name. She was said to be part Indian. She had three children, fathered by James Jamar, "the old master." They were Octavia (1882), Walter (1876), and Virginia (1879). Elnora Lanier said her Grandmother Octavia was the youngest, and was a baby when her mother [Lettie] ran

away: “The other two children were big enough to walk; Grandmother [Octavia] was a babe in arms. It was said Lettie went to Mississippi, but this isn’t verified.” She later married a Patterson and gained both a husband and a last name.



Elnora commented that to look at her grandmother, “you couldn’t tell her from White folks.” Octavia had one child, Walter Rooks, prior to her marriage to Buddy. Octavia and Buddy were the parents of Lettie Clay Goffer (1903), Archie Lee Clay (1904), Theodore Roosevelt Clay (1906), Pearl Clay Noble (1907), Lillie Clay Robinson (1915), and Pauline Clay Robinson (1917).



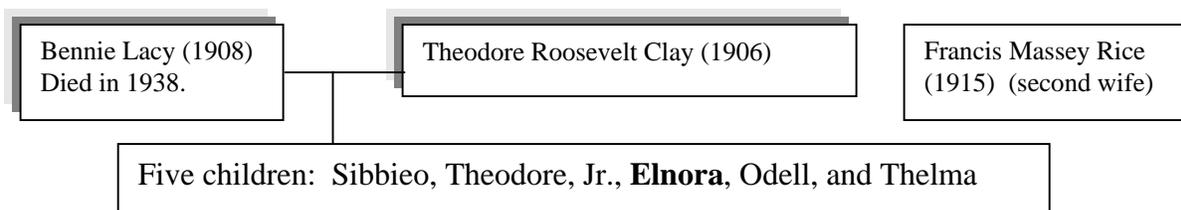
In the early 1900’s the Buddy Clay family was in Pond Beat. They lived near Jamar Cemetery. Their yard didn’t have grass. It was hard-packed dirt, and they swept it. They did have a rug on the floor in the house. The Clays had a vegetable garden and grew their own food. They had their own cows for milk, hogs, and chickens. They also had a mule. During the winter, Buddy would kill a hog and peddle pork and eggs to the other homes in the community. James Long, who lived south of the Clays, remembered that Buddy Clay was deaf in his older years. Edith Woodward remembered the Clays and spoke well of them.

Buddy and Octavia’s son Theodore Roosevelt Clay (born in 1906) was a little boy when they moved to Pond Beat. Theodore Clay, Jr. said his father’s education was limited to

the fifth grade because children of sharecroppers were allowed to attend school only after the crops were harvested, but he was motivated and had a thirst for knowledge.

By 1927, Buddy and Octavia’s son Theodore was a young man and had married Bennie Lacy, with whom he had five children (Sibbieo, Theodore, Jr., Elnora, Odell, and Thelma). Theodore R. Clay, Sr.’s wife, Bennie (born in 1908), was the daughter of Manch and Lucy Fisher Lacy in 1908. [Note: The family tree of Lucy Fisher Lacy was provided by Georgia Lacy Lanier and is included with the Felix Lanier and Georgia Lacy Lanier interview.]

Theodore wanted his own land, but his wife Lucy died in 1938 before that dream was to come true. Striving to provide a better life for his family, in 1940, he purchased a 100-acre farm with a FHA loan for \$5000. Elnora was young when her father moved her and her siblings from Pond Beat to their new home, several miles away from her grandparents. It was located on what is now the corner of Bob Wallace and Patton Road.



Having purchased a new home for his family, Theodore Clay married Francis Rice, who was born in 1915, the daughter of Will and Frances Massey Rice.

Walter Joiner remembered Theodore Clay’s house well and described the circumstances that enabled Theodore Clay to buy it—President Roosevelt’s “New Deal program.” Walter described Theodore’s house as being a two-story, built according to size of the family by the FHA standard. All such houses had a chicken house, barn, and a corral for hogs, and it was required that an orchard “be put out.” [Note: Walter Joiner’s comments about the New Deal program in the context of Huntsville and the pre-arsenal communities are presented in his interview in another section of this manuscript.] Walter’s description of the house matched the one given by Elnora Lanier.

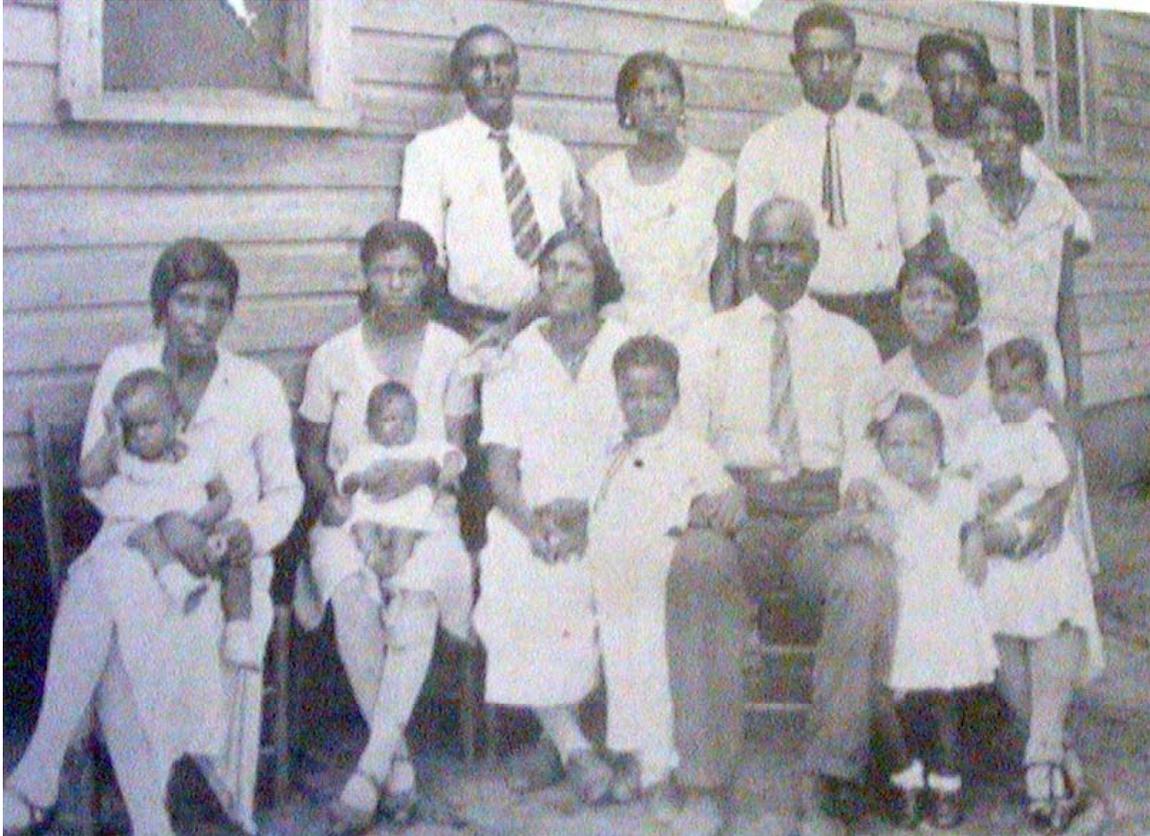
The Clay family did not enjoy their new home for very long. The following year, in July of 1941, “the Government took the farm.” Theodore Clay, with five children and a pregnant wife, began the search for a new home.

In his submission to the book, *The Heritage of Madison County*, Theodore Roosevelt Clay, Jr. wrote the following:

Roosevelt’s dream had just begun to come to fruition when he died in 1956. He was buried in Penny’s Cemetery. Sibbieo, Theodore and Elnora had earned college degrees, Odell and Thelma were in college. Frances, determined to fulfill her husband’s dream, continued to provide means for the other children to complete their education.



Roosevelt, a sharecropper with a dream, would be proud of his nine children and twenty-one grandchildren. Among them are two doctorates, eleven masters [degrees], eleven bachelors degrees and two still in school. Their career tracks include: administrators, teachers, businessmen, minister, scientist, curriculum specialist, real-estate professional, CPA, army major, and entrepreneurs.



The Deliah “Buddy” and Octavia Jamar Clay family. Source: *The Heritage of Madison County, Alabama.*

## **PATSY KINNEY: THE JAMAR/OWEN FAMILY**

### **The Owen/Jamar Family**

Patsy Kinney talked with the researcher and John Rankin because she was interested in learning more about where her family lived on the land that is now RSA. It was discerned that the Jamar/Owen family owned a large amount of land in Sections 29 and 32 (Township 1 South, Range 1 West) in Pond Beat, as well as a large parcel west of RSA Gate 7. The latter may have extended into what are now RSA boundaries.

Patsy said her great grandfather “four generations back” was Richard Jamar. Thomas Owen was her great great great grandfather. She emphasized that their name, Owen, does not have an “s” (Owens) on the end. The former slaves took the name as Owens, with an “s”.

John Rankin researched the ancestry of Richard Jamar. Richard’s lineage goes back to Henri Jamar, who was born in 1745, possibly in London with the French Huguenots. He came to the colonies (America) in about 1770. He stayed in the Alexandria, Virginia area before going into the Pennsylvania militia as a lieutenant. After the Revolutionary War, he settled in Virginia with his wife Jeane; their children were: Henry, Betsy, and Richard.

Richard was born September 12, 1785 in Richmond, Virginia. In 1811 he married Elizabeth (Betsy) Adams, who was born in 1787, the daughter of William Adams, from Orange County, Virginia. The family story is that she was a cousin to John Quincy Adams. Richard and Mary went to Alabama in 1819 when Richard A. Jamar was 34 years old. With them were their two sons, Thomas and Larkin. Others came from Virginia at the same time, included a family named Bransford. Richard married three times in his lifetime, before passing away at age 88.

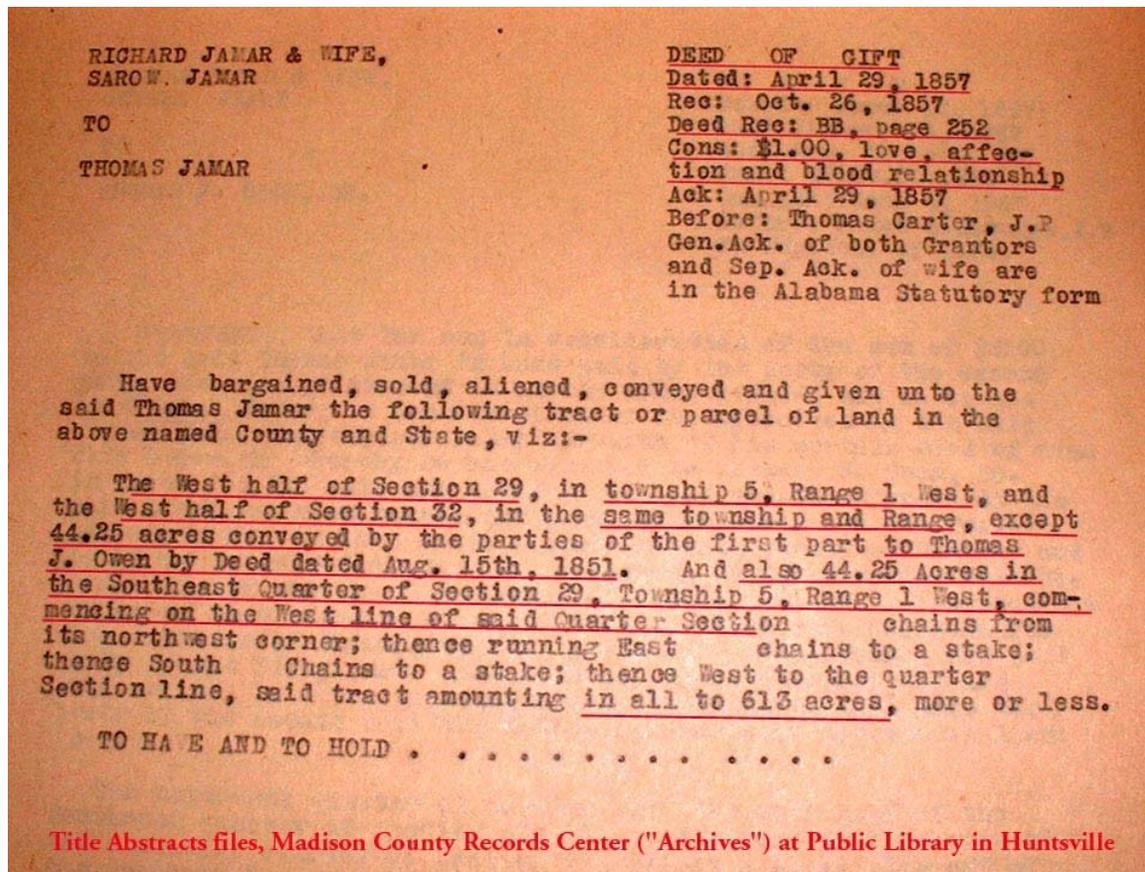
Richard’s daughter Mary married Thomas John Owen, joining together the Owen and Jamar families. She was born in Virginia in 1815 and died October 30, 1841. Patsy Kinney said it wasn’t the Owen family who had money (“although they had their own little bit”)—it was the Jamars. Family lore has it that the Owens “lost their money on a handshake to John Jamar.” It has been held that this was a humorous remark made by Harrison Owen referring to the handshake between him and Thomas (“John”) Jamar, blessing the marriage of John and his daughter.

Patsy said her grandparents, Charles B. Owen and Ettie McGuire Owen, lived in Pond Beat. They had a number of children: Richard, Wilbur, Gene, Wayne, Harry, Donald, Edwin, Doris, Ann, and Thelma. Richard, Donald, and Doris were born there on the land that is now RSA. Apparently, they lived on what had once been a plantation. Patsy said that her mother’s aunt told her that when her [the aunt’s] father and mother had a party, many people would come. The guests “would come and stay.” “Darkies would sit on the balconies and play music.” That was in the 1800s.

Patsy Kinney said that through her Jamar ancestors she is related to the Jamar family in the local area who is Black. She had telephoned a Jamar descendant who is Black and suggested that, since they were related, they meet each other, but the person she called said she had a busy schedule and such a meeting had not occurred.

### A Glimpse into Land Ownership on RSA

The deed of gift copied below shows Richard Jamar and his wife, whose name appears to be written Saro W. (Sarah) Jamar, in 1857, already owned land on land in the area that would in time become known as Pond Beat. They gave land in Sections 29 and 32 to Thomas Jamar for "\$1.00, love, affection and blood relationship on April 29, 1857.



The first page of the a Deed of Trust (Deed Rec. GG, page 203) dated March 11, 1867 is copied on the following page to show land transfer of land from Thomas Jamar and his wife Sebell Jamar to Thomas J. Owen, Senior.

THOMAS JAMAR & WIFE,  
SEBEL JAMAR

TO

THOMAS J. OWEN, TRUSTEE

DEED OF TRUST  
Dated: March 11, 1867  
Rec: June 11, 1867  
Deed Rec. CC, page 203  
Cons: See below  
Gen. Ack: June 4, 1867  
Before: James H. Scruggs, JPC  
No Sep. Ack. of wife

By and between Thomas Jamar of the first part, Thomas J. Owen, Senior of the second part and Sebel Jamar, wife of said Thomas, of the third part, all of the County of Madison in the State of Alabama, WITNESSETH: That whereas the said Thomas Jamar and Sebel Jamar, his wife, have this day by their joint deed of even date and executed contemporaneously herewith by the said Thomas Jamar and Sebel, his wife, as parties of the first part, to Thomas J. Owens, Senior as party of the second part, conveyed to the said Thomas J. Owens, Senior, certain lands situate in said County and particularly described in said Deed to which reference is here made for the contents thereof and the description of the lands thereby conveyed, And whereas the said Sebel Jamar refused to execute said Deed thereby relinquishing her dower in the lands therein described without compensation for the said relinquishment of her dower in said lands; And whereas to induce the said Sebel Jamar to join the said Thomas Jamar in the execution of said Deeds so as thereby to relinquish her said Dower in said lands therein described, the said Thomas Jamar expressly promised the said Sebel that if she, the said Sebel would join him in the execution of said Deed he, the said Thomas would contemporaneously therewith and as a compensation for her said relinquishment of dower convey by deed to the said Thomas J. Owens, Senr. in trust for the sole and separate use and as the separate estate of the said Sebel in manner and form as hereinafter done the lands hereinafter described and conveyed, and whereas in consideration of the said undertaking and promise of the said Thomas Jamar and of the execution of these presents, the said Sebel has, contemporaneously herewith joined with her said husband in the execution of said Deed and has thereby relinquished her dower in the lands in said Deed described;

Now in consideration of Ten Dollars in hand paid by the party of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, the said Thomas Jamar hath this day granted, bargained and sold and doth by these presents grant, bargain and sell unto the said Thomas J. Owen, Senior, in trust as hereinafter stated, the following tracts or parcels of land, to-wit:-

44.25 Acres in the Southeast Quarter of Section 29, Township 5, Range 1 West, commencing on the west line of said quarter Section chains from its northwest quarter, thence running East chain to a stake thence South chains to a stake; thence West to the quarter Section line, the said 44.25 acres hereby conveyed being the 44.25 Acres in said southeast quarter of Section 29, which is embraced in and conveyed by the Deed of Richard Jamar and Sarah his wife to

Title Abstracts files, Madison County Records Center ("Archives") at Public Library in Huntsville

The warranty deed on the following page shows land in Sections 29 and 32 going from Thomas J. Owen Senior and his wife to M.E. Owen. This was recorded in Book BBB, page 93, dated in March 5, 1873 and filed April 5, 1876. The abstract is dated 1892.

Title Abstracts files, Madison County Records Center ("Archives") at Public Library in Huntsville

BOOK BBB, page 93.  
Dated: March 5th, 1873  
Filed: April 5th, 1876.

THOMAS J. OWEN SR & Wife  
M. E. OWEN

WARRANTY DEED  
Considerations: \$3000.00

TO

THOMAS JAMAR.

The N W 1/4 section 29.  
The W 1/2 of S W 1/4 of Section 29.  
All of the N E 1/4 of S W 1/4 Section 29.  
Except a small strip off of the South boundary of the same  
Section.  
Also the W 1/2 of fractional section 32, except 44.25/100  
acres thereof conveyed by Richard Jamar and wife to said  
Thomas Jamar, dated August 15, 1851. All of said lands  
lying in Township 5, Range 1 West and containing in all  
about 578 acres more or less.

Acknowledged before J. D. W. Smith. J.P.

We the Huntsville Abstract Company of Huntsville, Alabama,  
do hereby certify that this is a complete and correct copy of  
Deeds contained in Record Book B B B, pages 90-92-93 of the  
County Records of Madison County, Alabama.

Dated: 1892.

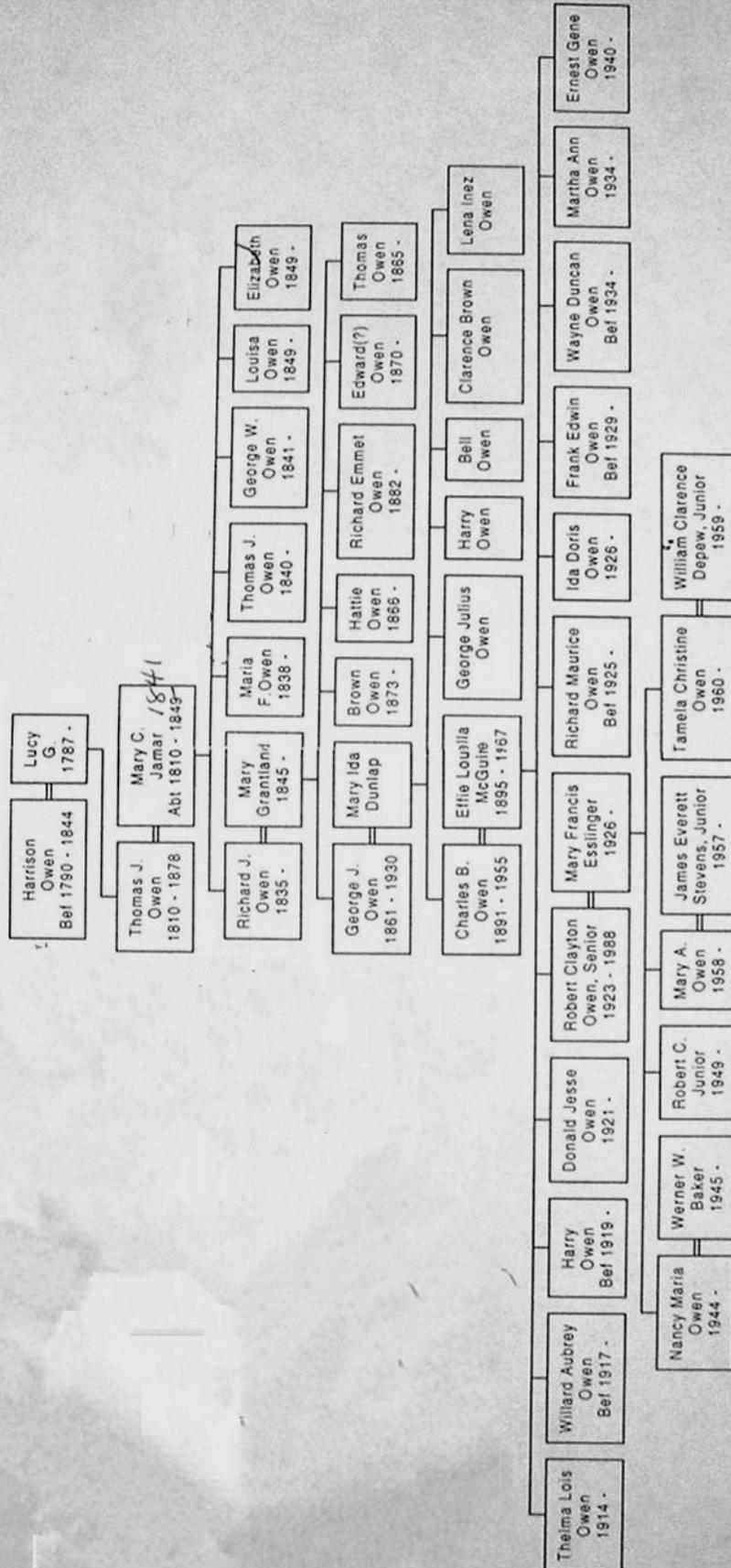
Huntsville Abstract Company.  
By W. A. Blair.

.....  
ABSTRACTORS NOTE: An examination of the deed Record BBB  
shows that Pages 86 to 94, both inclusive have been cut out  
of the original record, and that the conveyances shown on this  
and the last previous page of this abstract have been inserted  
and pasted in the Record Book as above shown.  
The Huntsville Abstract Company were professional Abstractors  
about the date of the above certificate and, in the present  
Abstractors opinion the above copies were made from their own  
records, which were secured prior to the destruction of said  
records, as above shown.

In on page 277 of this manuscript, an 1875 map shows the Owen/Jamar land holdings in the area in that year.

From Patsy Kinney, March 2, 2005]

### Descendants of Harrison Owen



## **CLEOPHUS LACY**

Telephone interview April 13, 2005

### **The Family**

Cleophus Lacy lives out of the state now. He was born in 1932. His parents were Connie Burton and Collis Lacy. His paternal grandparents were Lucy and Robert Lacy. He said, "They were all dead when I grew up." He noted that his father's sister was Buster Joiner's wife. ["Buster" was Percy Joiner.] His brothers and sisters were William, Ervin, Mary Lue, Bertha, James, Marvin, and Connie.

### **Where They Lived and Their House**

Connie Burton Lacy and Collis Lacy lived in Pond Beat. When the researcher asked where the family lived in relation to Horton School, Cleophus said:

We lived south of the school near the Tennessee River. The house was like a shack. Two rooms and a kitchen in the back. It was on stilts and surrounded by pine trees. It was in a little valley below a hill. We had to walk about a mile to get to the mail on the main road [the current McAlpine Road]. Mother's sister [Elnora Clay Lanier's mother] lived in this area, too. About 95 percent of this area was Black families. There were two or three poor white families—fishermen or hunters.

The mailbox was out there near the big house on the hill. The big white house had pillars in front. No sharecropper houses were right by the big house. They were two or three miles away. Some of the sharecropper houses were built out of log. Some logs were rotted. They were square logs.

Edith Woodward described tenant houses about a quarter mile from the Woodward House, south toward the river. She said most of them were log houses with two or three rooms. However, Edith never mentioned the Woodward house having columns. The house Cleophus described was probably the one on Schiffman & Company, Inc. property that was inhabited by the Schiffman land manager, Robert Long, and his family. James Long described that house as being of a colonial style and having white columns.

When asked if he could recall any other neighbors, Cleophus said:

There was a white family that lived across the way and up by the mountain. Frank Durham. The family had four or five kids. I don't think they went to school. They were very poor. More poor than we were. When they came to borrow something, my mother fed them. They fished all the time and would sell fish in the neighborhood.

## Daily Life

**Food.** Cleophus said they raised their own food. They raised pigs, cows, and chickens. The chicken house was out back. It was a “two or three decker” with a slanted tin roof. Cleophus said, “There was tin roofs on everything—the chicken house, the house, and the barn. We had a mesh wire fence built around the chicken house.” Of course, the family also raised vegetables, which Cleophus said his mother canned.

**Mother Sewed.** Mother made almost everything. She didn’t make the bib overalls. We bought them at Terry’s Department Store in town.

**School.** Cleophus said, “We had some school. The school was closed at harvest. It started late, April or early May. And in the winter.”

Cleophus said he went first to Horton School, and then, when he moved off the arsenal to the Farley school. He said the school in Farley for Black children was white frame and had two good-sized rooms. One was for the upper grades (up to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade) and one was for the lower grades. There were two teachers. One was Dave. Cleophus couldn’t remember his last name, but he did remember Rosetta Thornton. He commented, “She was tall, thin, light-skinned, and mean as a rattlesnake.”

Cleophus said there was a tree in the yard, and in the open field, somebody had put up a seesaw and swings. It was right across the road from Farley school for White children (the location of the current Farley school). Cleophus commented, “They had everything on their playground.” The researcher asked if they [the Black children] ever went over to play on that playground after school was out and the White students had gone. Cleophus stated, “We didn’t go on that property. We walked home. They rode the bus. They would taut us, call us names, Nigger and stuff.”

**Recreation.** When asked what people did for recreation, Cleophus said, “I had four older brothers and three sisters. We always had fun.” Trying to think of what would have been recreation, he came up with the occasional trip to town, drinking (for some people), and listening to the radio. Cleophus said the following (categorized by the author).

### Going to town to the Gin:

We didn’t have a car. We didn’t have a car until 1947. We had a horse and wagon. [Did you go to town?] Once in a while. In the fall, when we were picking cotton, we’d take a bale to the gin in town. Daddy would take me along. It was three or four miles out of Huntsville on Lilly Flag. [Was that near the Fleming community?] Yes. Somebody broke in his house and killed his [Fleming’s] wife. The story ran for months. That was probably about 1941 or the beginning of 1942.

### **The Radio:**

We listened to the radio. [Did you have Delco lights?]. No. The first radio we had was run off a big battery and had an antenna, like you used to see on televisions in the house. The battery was next to the radio. I had a cousin who was handy with wires. He ran a copper wire out to a ground. The ground was a metal stake or post in the ground. We had to put baking soda in the battery when it went down.

It was about 1938 that we got it. We were just starting to get into the war. Joe Lewis was boxing. People would gather at our house to hear it [the boxing matches] on Friday nights. Mother or Daddy didn't allow drinking at our house.

### **Drinking:**

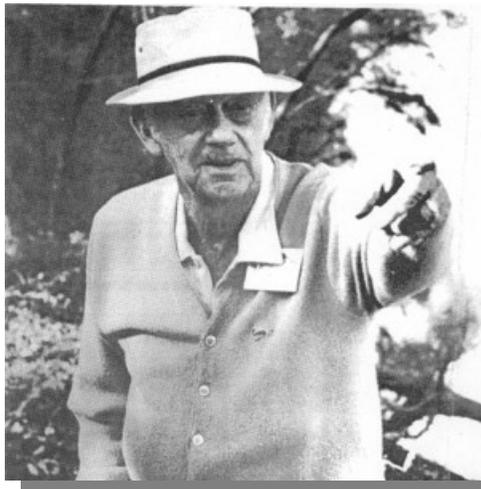
Some people drank. [Did people make home brew?] Yes. Home brew was put in a big keg; it had hops in it and stuff. They'd take the barrel down and put it in the spring. [How did they pour it out?] The barrel had a hole in the top with a plug in it. When we were little boys, we'd sneak down and pull the plug. One time I got drunk.

### **Christmas**

Cleophus said:

Christmastime wasn't like it is today. Me and my brothers and dad would go out in the woods and cut down a tree. We'd set it up. My mother got little red berries that grew in the neighborhood and strung them with a thread. We put cotton balls on the tree. They were pretty. Mother took strips of the colored paper that we'd bring home from school. She'd take a scissors and make curls of the strips. Each child would get one toy. No more. But we had lots of fruit. We had plenty of food.

**WALTER COONEY PENLAND (born 1902)**  
**An Interview by Ed Peters**



**Walter Cooney Penland. Source: *The Redstone Rocket*, Nov. 2, 1983.**

In November of 1983, Walter Cooney Penland visited Redstone Arsenal. He wanted to see the places he had left over 40 years before when the Army took ownership of the land. Writer Ed Peters accompanied Penland. Penland pointed out places and, through his words of remembrance, gave Peters a glimpse of “what Redstone Arsenal was like before the Army came,” back in the days of Pond Beat and the many other small communities that were once there.

In this interview, Penland provides a wealth of information in discussing his former home site and the structures there, the Indian burials that were by the home site, the absence of the

monuments that were in family cemetery when he left in 1941, the community, hunting, crops, and the results of TVA damming the river.

Penland said that in 1935, TVA took a large amount of the Penland family’s bottomland, leaving them with only 17 acres. At the time the Army took ownership, his father, David Penland, is shown on the Army Real Estate Map as owning Parcel D-162. It is reasonable to assume that the home Walter described was located there.

Penland’s comments about the “Lee House” where the Harris family lived have been presented in a previous section that focused on the life of the Harris family on the arsenal. Those paragraphs will not be repeated here. The remainder of the article, with the exception of those excerpted paragraphs, is produced verbatim below. The article gives us a glimpse of the land that is now Redstone Arsenal through the eyes and from the mind of a man who was born 104 years ago (as of 2006).

**Source: “Former arsenal resident visits old home place,” *The Redstone Rocket*, Nov. 2, 1983**

Walter Cooney Penland, a former resident of the Pond Beat Community that once thrived on what is now Army land, revisited Thursday the place several generations of Penlands called home.

His grandfather, David Alexander Penland, was one of the areas first settlers. Before the Civil War, he came down from Tennessee and bought or homesteaded 600 acres of bottomland by the Tennessee River and Indian Creek.

He built a two-story, seven-room house on a high spot near the creek just east of Bradford Mountain. That house was home to four generations of Penlands spanning a century until the family had to move around 1940 when the Army bought the house and the last 17 acres the family owned. The rest of the farm had been taken by the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1935.

David Alexander Penland came in to the area soon after the Indians had left. He was a farmer, preacher and school teacher. He taught Latin and Greek at the Hobbs Island and Taylorville Schools and was pastor of Hobbs Island [Ebenezer] Presbyterian Church for 55 years. He is buried at Hobbs Island Cemetery.

When David Alexander Penland settled on the land, it was native hardwood forest except for three acres on the river that had been cleared by Indians.

But Walter Cooney Penland, who will be 81 next month, said the land was all cleared and in crops as far back as he remembers.

The land is presently in a remote part of Test Area 1. Some of it once again embraces mature hardwood timber, some has been planted in pines and some is in scrub vegetation.

"It's growed up to where I can't tell much about it. It just don't look right," said Penland as he looked over his old neighborhood.

Penland was accompanied by his nephew, also named Walter Penland and who like his uncle was born on the

arsenal, and his great nephew Richard Penland.

They were escorted by Murphy Stoltz, a Test Area 1 worker who has a map showing the location of roads and who the property owners were when TVA bought the land in the 1930's.

Using the maps and the Penlands' description of their home place as being on a high spot near the creek, Stoltz was able to pinpoint the old house location.

While the old house was torn down when the Army bought it, the Penlands instantly recognized the place from the presence of ornamental "bear grass" plants in the yard still thriving after more than 40 years.

They found remnants of tin and chimney rock that had belonged to the old house and just down an old road they discovered bars of mortar that had chinked cracks in the logs of a house that had belonged to Walter Penland's (the nephew's) mother.

Walter Cooney Penland located what he identified as his old garden spot behind the house and a burial plot that he said contained three Indian graves. The graves, which aren't apparent now, were identifiable by depressions in the earth many years ago, Penland said. He said they were present when his pioneer grandfather built the house on the site in the early 1800's as the area's first settler.

He said the old house contained 7 rooms, three rock chimneys and five fireplaces. It was built around cedar posts sunk five feet in the ground and set two feet apart. It had yellow poplar siding and pine floors. Penland was born in the house as

was his nephew Walter who is 59 years old.

[Here the visit to the “old Lee home,” one mile west of the Penland place, was described.]

After the war many blacks remained in the area and lived and worked on the Penland farm and other large farms. There were numerous black land owners in the area, some of whom amassed large farms.

The Pond Beat community was along the present day Buxton Road which was known then as the Farley-Triana Road. It continued west where Dodd Road turns north today, and crossed Indian Creek into Triana.

Penland describes life in the community as “just country life. We fished in the creek and river, hunted rabbits and squirrels. There were little truck patches around, and gardens.

“People generally had a cow they milked by hand. There were no tractors, no trucks, now and then maybe you’d see a Ford car.

“There was a whole lot of good corn and cotton land and good hay land. Rises from the river fertilized it every year, maybe twice a year.” Before TVA installed dams in the river, it would rise out of its banks every spring and cover the fields with standing water for a week or so. The receding waters left behind a layer of rich sediment which renewed the soil’s fertility. “After it quit doing that, that land was just about as poor as anywhere else,” Penland said.

Another consequence of damming the river was that it raised the water level

considerably in Indian Creek, Penland said.

Game was plentiful in the area, except for deer and wild turkey. “There were a few deer when my papa was a boy, just a few and a few wild turkeys. But I never did see a deer down there or a turkey either,” said Penland.

Bradford Mountain which loomed near his home place wasn’t called that, as Penland recalls. It was known instead as Bear Tail Mountain.

The last stop on Penland’s sentimental journey was at the Simpson Cemetery to visit the grave of Henry Simpson which he helped dig when he was 16 years old. Simpson was a wealthy bachelor who owned some 400 acres in the area of present-day McKinley Range just east of the Penland place.

Depressions in the cemetery indicated where the graves were located but Penland couldn’t identify one he helped dig because the marker was gone. All of the tombstones that had been in the cemetery, including one six feet tall, had been removed, according to Penland.

“They used to have a song, ‘Time Changes Everything’. It sure does,” said Penland, taking a last look at the old cemetery, now indistinguishable from the surrounding forest, save for a rusty fence around it.

[**Note:** Archaeological Site 1Ma1024 seems to match the location of the house Penland described in the above article.]

# THE "LEE HOUSE," THE HARRIS HOUSE, AND THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SOME OF THOSE WHO LIVED THERE

Parcel D-167 on the U.S. Army Property Map

Harris family members and neighbors whose remembrances were used to compile the verbal picture of life on the Harris farm:

**Sam Harris Jr.** (son of Sam Harris Sr. and grandson of J.B. Harris)

**Corrine Shovelton**  
(daughter of Sam Harris Sr. and grand daughter of J.B. Harris)

**Juanita Lassiter** (wife of J.B. Harris' grandson Millburn)

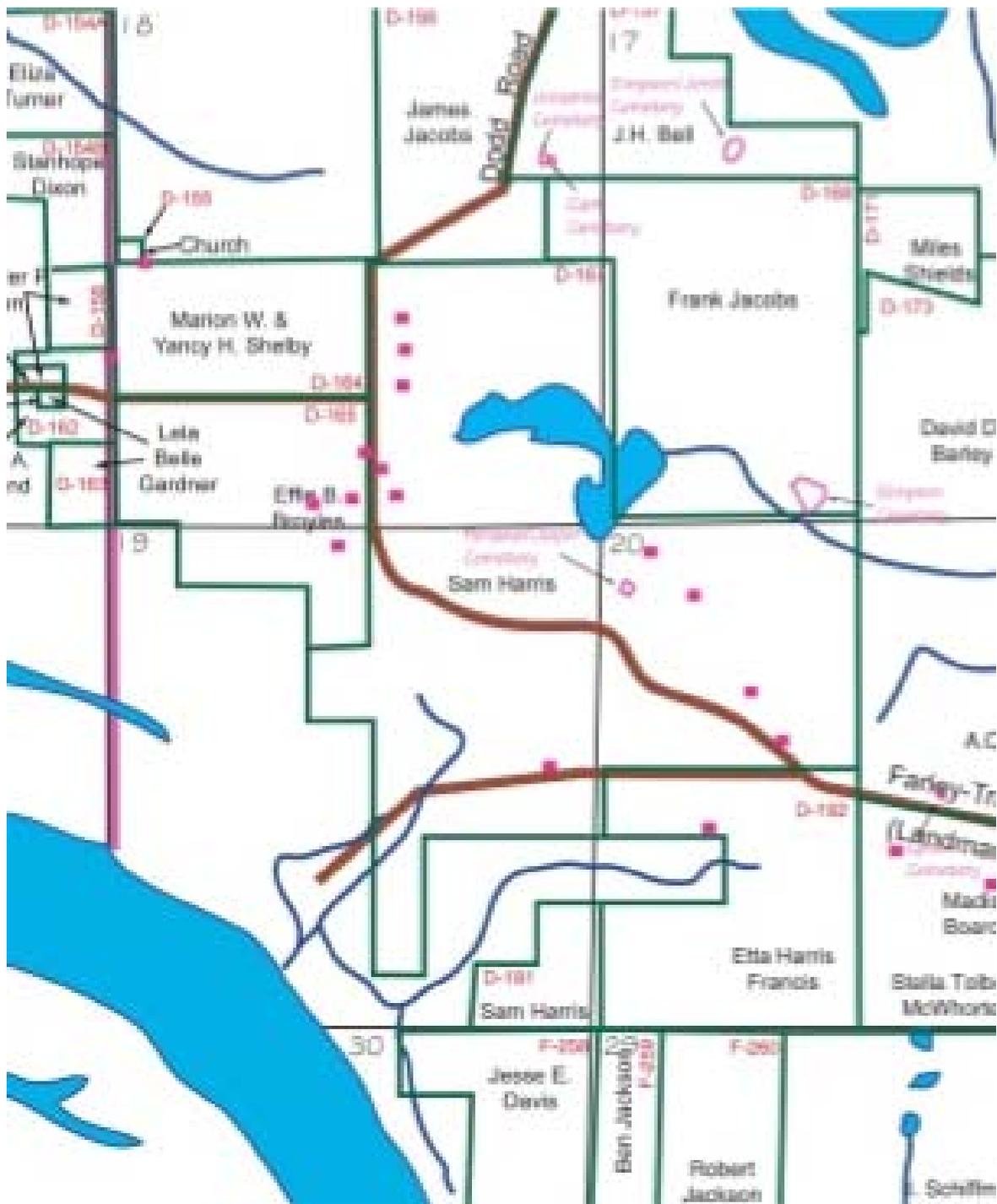
**James Long** (neighbor)

**Walter Cooper Penland**  
(neighbor)

**Bill White** (neighbor and also the nephew of Juanita Lassiter)

**Walter Joiner** (a young Black man who lived nearby)





Parcels owned by the Harris family. Source: Map prepared the Army by AAC.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The one historic property that remains in its original location (NE ¼ of Section 19, T5S, R1W) on Redstone Arsenal is the Harris House. When the Government acquired the land from the Harris family, another historic structure that dated much further back in time was also present. It was moved from the arsenal a few decades later. During the days the Harris family lived on the land, the Lee House was owned and inhabited by J.B. Harris and family. The Harris family members who were interviewed referred to the house as, simply, “the big house.” Friends and neighbors called it the Harris place.

In the early 1930’s, Pat Jones wrote descriptive articles about a number of the historic houses in Madison County, including the Lee House on the Harris property. Jones called it The Lee Home, giving it the name of the man who built the finer part of the structure. By the time the structure (the majority of it) was acquired for removal from RSA in 1973 by Mr. and Mrs. John T. Darwin, the name Lee Home had evolved to “the Lee Mansion.”

This section first presents Charity Cooper and her husband, James Cooper, who built the first two-room dwelling, and then Charity’s second husband, Houston Lee, who added to it, building the large house that would come to be called the Lee House. The second presents a description of the “Lee House” when it was owned by J.B. Harris, and the Harris House, which was built when J.B.’s son Sam married and had a family, resulting in his being referred to within this manuscript as Sam Sr. Then, information from ethnographic interviews and historic documents brings together the past and a perspective of life on the property as it was between 1920 and 1941.

## **HISTORY OF THE “LEE HOUSE”**

### **Records and Articles Written about the Lee House**

A number of articles were published in the *Huntsville Times* and *The Redstone Rocket* in the time period surrounding the removal of what they referred to as the Lee Mansion from its location on the north side of Buxton Road [old Farley-Triana Road] on the arsenal in 1973. In addition, the Cultural Resources Manager at RSA holds on file various items of military correspondence concerning the acquisition of the Lee House by Mr. and Mrs. Darwin. A letter from the Commanding General written to the Commander of the U.S. Army Material Command in Alexandria, Virginia, which refers to the action to relocate the Lee House, provides a history of the house using material written by Pat Jones.

The history written by Jones was provided to Mrs. John Tyler Darwin as an attachment to a letter written to her on November 14, 1973 by Harvie P. Jones of Jones and Herrin Architects in Huntsville, who was also an Architect Member of the Alabama Historical Commission. Mrs. Darwin had submitted the letter and the attachment to the RSA Commander.

In reviewing all the records and articles written about the Lee House, it became apparent that authors' main source of historical information about the land, the structures, and the people who had lived there prior to 1920 was the article written and published in 1931 by Pat Jones. Pat Jones researched and wrote about historic homes in Madison County. His articles were published in *The Huntsville Times*. The Heritage Room in the Madison County Public Library in Huntsville has photocopied each of the articles and put the collection in notebooks, which are presented as two volumes. The article Pat Jones wrote about the Lee house is provided verbatim:

**"The Lee Home," *The Huntsville Times*, March 5, 1933, p. 4.  
Written by Pat Jones**

### **The Lee Home**

A Z-shaped dwelling in two sections, of different ages, wrapped around an Irish woman with a business tendency, and distinguished by the most beautiful circular stairway in Madison County—all of this comes to light in a review of the Col. H. H. Lee home, for the last 15 years the residence of Joseph B. Harris, situated near the Tennessee river four miles west of Whitesburg.

Tall cedars and two of the largest pecan trees in the South, which have borne for more than 60 years, shade the home, forming a gradual contour from the hundreds of fertile acres of river bottomland surrounding.

Two rooms of the mansion, both of brick and forming the lower part of the Z, were built soon after 1818, and were followed nearly 25 years later by the others, built of substantial frame material.

### **Land Entered by Cooper**

The quarter section of land, on which this home was erected was entered in 1818 by James Cooper. This was choice acreage, and included some of the best farming soil in the county, all in the center of what is now known as Pond Beat, a name gained from the number of tiny ponds formed by floods when the river is high. His neighbors were scarce, but he was not many minutes' ride from Ditto's landing, the import and export center for this section during the early years of the century.

With bricks hauled from the landing, where they had been brought by boat from Chattanooga or some other point, Cooper erected a small two-story building, the beginning of the present mansion. This was to be his home and that of his bride, Charity Cooper, born in 1801, the daughter of

William Allison, who had come over from Ireland several years after her birth.

This settler did well, hauling his cotton to Whitesburg for shipment, and occasionally coming to Huntsville to get supplies. He found that his land, untilled before his arrival, could not have been better suited for a young planter, and made the most of his opportunity.

### **Cooper Bought More Land Later**

In 1830, his fortune increasing, he bought for \$800 three-quarters of an adjoining section from Rodah Horton, builder of the present McCracken home on Meridian pike. Four years later, through a deal with Charles G. Bowen, covered by four notes, he added one quarter of still another section.

Then came his death—through suicide—on Dec. 7, 1834, the same year of his purchase from Bowen. Just what influenced him to take his own life—whether money matters, troubles with his wife, or despondency over his health—is not known. On this day, cold for the method of dying he chose, he walked the mile to the banks of the Tennessee, fastened an iron pot he had carried with him over his head, and plunged into the waters.

His will, made the June prior, left the majority of his property, estimated at nearly \$12,000, to his wife. Her share included his real estate, his cotton crop, valued at \$2,470.51, and 18 slaves, appraised at \$10,000. She also was bequeathed all cattle, horses and household furniture.

Cooper further specified that \$500 should be given to each of his sisters, Mrs. Mary Wall, Mrs. Nancy Veitch and Mrs. Elizabeth Ross, wife of the Rev. Alexander Ross. His father was to receive \$25 annually as long as he lived.

### **Charity Took Over Farm**

Charity took over the reins there on the plantation without thought of moving the few miles to Huntsville for an environment not nearly so lonesome. She directed her slaves with as true an iron hand as ever an Irish woman possessed, using her own judgment as a farm housewife in having potatoes planted in that field, corn in this one, or cotton over the entire acreage.

She forgot her troubles during the first year or two of the new task, yet, as the months passed, she gradually began to miss the companionship of her husband.

But a suitor appeared on the scene. He was Col. Houston H. Lee, originally of Tennessee, five years her junior and the owner of a half a section of land jammed up into the ell formed by her three sections.

After this courtship began, Lee often was her counsel in matters pertaining to her farm. Often, he rode over in the early evenings and sat there at her doorstep in the bright moonlight that flooded the slope toward the river. Quietly, they talked of new arrivals in Pond Beat, of the latest wrinkle in cotton planting, or of other topics of the day, interrupted only by some cow or sheep in the lowlands, or by the sound of a stern-wheeler chugging its way slowly up the river.

As the months rolled by, Charity gradually began to realize that this neighbor was becoming part of her life, so she listened to his proposal of marriage when finally it came.

### **Marriage Agreement Recorded**

Charity was a business woman and she considered that all agreements should be treated carefully and wisely. On Dec. 1, 1840, she came to the courthouse in Huntsville and had a marriage agreement recorded.

“Whereas, a marriage is shortly intended to be solemnized between Charity Cooper and Houston H. Lee,” it read, “and the said Charity is possessed in her own right of a large property, both of a real and personal nature, and whereas, it is agreed by and between the contracting parties that said Charity Cooper shall reserve to her own separate use, benefit and control, exclusive of the said Houston H. Lee....but that the same (property) shall in all things remain in subject to the rights, control and dominion of the said Charity Cooper in as full and ample manner as if said intended marriage had never taken place....”

On this same day, she recorded a deed of trust with James W. Fennell of near Guntersville, grandfather of W. F. Esslinger and Dr. James L. Jordan of this city.

After their marriage, the Lees began plans to enlarge the wife’s home left by her first husband. Four large rooms, 20 by 20 feet square with ceilings 14 feet high were built in a two-story section to form the upper part of the Z near the gateway.

### **Stairway in Hall**

In the wide center hall between the two rooms at each end of this division of the mansion was built the gradually winding walnut stairway, the really remarkable phase of the home, considering the tools with which carpenters worked in those days. These steps were put up so carefully that even now, nearly a century later, they do not shake or give with the weight upon them. To allow the curve, the wall in the rear part of the hall was rounded

to coincide with the angle of the outer banister. At regular intervals in the wall along the stairs were placed niches for statuary, comprising another feature seen in few local homes.

From the front section of the dwelling, back to the old brick part was constructed a connecting link a story and a half in height and composed of four more rooms. This division was inclosed on both sides and at the back brick stoop, making it possible to pass from any room in the house during rainy weather without going out into the dampness.

A cellar, reached by two doors from the outside or by an inner door near the back, was excavated under the entire building.

### **Porch Built of Cedar**

Though its floor was of brick, the framework of the front porch was of solid cedar, shading a doorway in two panels, with transoms at both sides and at the top.

This house probably never saw many dances during its occupation by the Lees, but in later years, particularly the decades following the Civil War, it became the social center for Pond Beat. Gay times, with many guests from Huntsville and the surrounding country were frequent there then.

On October 3, 1853, Charity's second husband died. His survivors, beside his wife, included eight brothers and sisters, Caswell of Tennessee, Alfred of Missouri, Anne J. of Tennessee, P.J.G. Lee of Missouri, Preston of Tennessee, W.P. of Missouri, Pryor N. of California and Eliza A. of Madison county, all of full age, but the last named mentally deficient.

With the exception of \$1,000, which he willed to his niece, Mary Elizabeth Inman, daughter of Anne J., he left his entire estate, including 18 negroes, nine mules, four wagons, 51 sheep, one bull, four yokes of oxen, six steers, 15 yearlings, 11 cows, three heifers and 162 hogs, to his wife.

But even with the property left her by her two husbands, Charity was unable to meet her indebtedness before the beginning of the Civil War. The strain of this conflict carried her debts to such a large figure that she had to turn the home over for a sheriff's sale in 1867 in order to cover her agreement with Fennell. The estate was bought in [no date was in the text] by the Fennell heirs, James W. and Francis Fennell, for \$7,745.97.

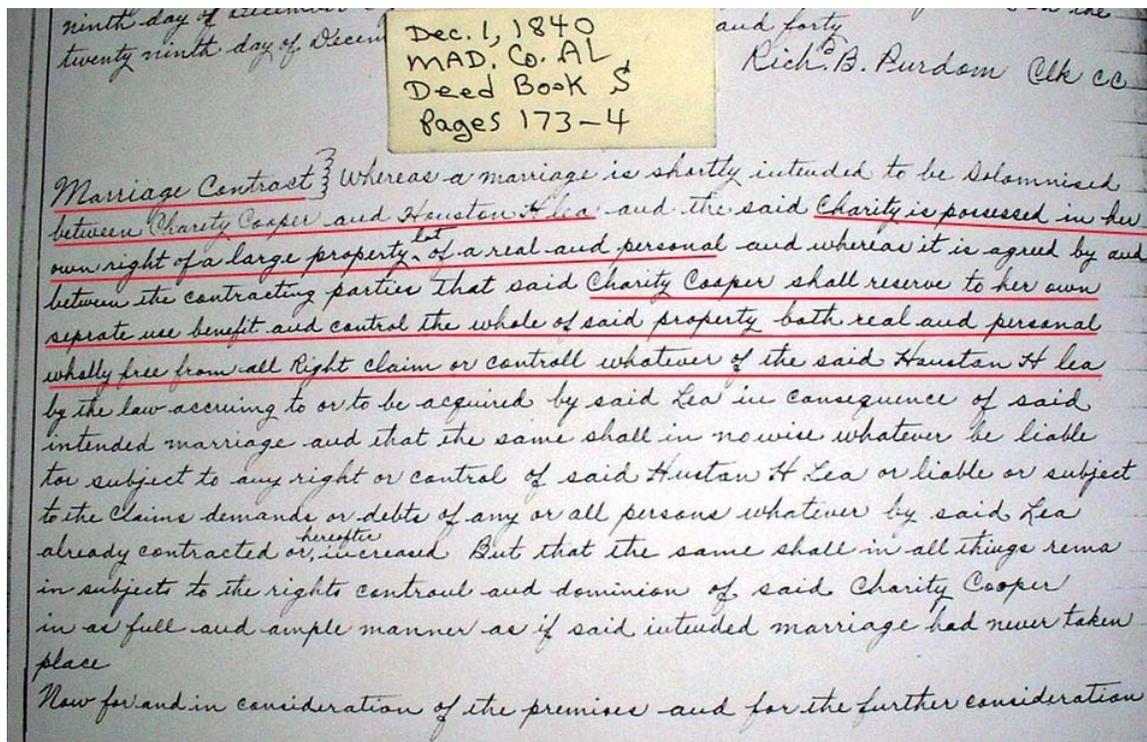
Charity died childless and with a small amount of money in March, 1872. In her will, she set aside funds for her own burial and for the removal of the graves of her two husbands to the graveyard at Ebenezer Presbyterian Church. In addition, she left \$200 to the church to buy window blinds, curtains, library bell, stoves, and for the repair of the cemetery.

Her second husband's portrait was willed to a neighbor, the Rev. A. Penland, her books to the church, and the remainder of her property to the Young Men's Board of Education of the United States and to the Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church.

The plantation was sold by the Fennells to George F. Scruggs in 1882. Four years later, it was bought by Solomon Schiffman. Since that time and up to the year it came into the possession of Mr. Harris, several others have owned it.

The home stands intact today, with the exception of the old slave quarters, which once stood a few yards away to the east. Even a huge old sistern [sic] remains, though not in use. Huge logs give cheer from the fireplaces and wide pine boards mark the original floors. In fact, successive owners have made no change to mar the testimony of their existence left by Cooper, Lee and Charity Allison.

Charity had her marital agreement with her neighbor, Col. Houston H. Lee, recorded at the courthouse on Dec. 1, 1840. In joining their plantations, they had a total of 2000 acres and 36 slaves. In 1841, Lee began the construction of the large, two-story house that was connected to the original brick house.



An article in *The Redstone Rocket*, dated October 7, 1970 (author not shown on copy in the files of the Redstone Arsenal CRM) provides additional description of the construction of the Lee House:

After their marriage, the Lees enlarged the house left by James Cooper. Four large rooms, 20 by 20 feet with 14 feet high ceilings were built in a two story section to form the upper part of the main house.

The heart of the house is the wide center hall with a walnut, cantilevered stairway all the more remarkable for the utilitarian character of the rest of the structure. The wall is curved to match the turns of the banister.

An additional four room section of a story and a half was built into the front of the house, enclosed on both sides. A small brick porch built of trapezoid shaped bricks in which the finger and handprints of Charity's slaves can still be seen provided an outdoor passageway making it possible to reach any part of the house without being directly exposed to the elements in inclement weather. (p. 14)

### **A Diagram of the House Layout**

While Corrine Harris grew up in the Sam Harris House, she was, daily, in and out of the nearby home of her grandparents, J.B. and Martha Harris (the Lee house). On the following page, a diagram is presented which was drawn under her direction. Corrine's brother, Sam Harris Jr. looked on and also gave input. While one can view the Lee Mansion as it is preserved in Madison today, the sketch will give a perspective of the house as it was with all of its components.



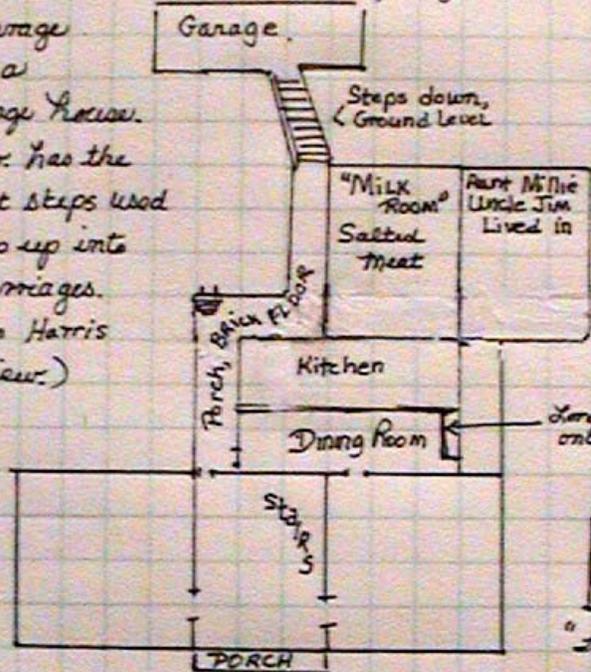
The sketch shows that the original part of the Cooper/Lee house (which was razed) was used by the Harris family as a "milk room," Salted meat was also kept there. "Aunt Millie" and "Uncle Jim" (Black people who were the help) stayed in these rooms. A covered walkway was on each side of the kitchen and continued to a back porch that was also covered and had a brick floor. From the porch, the walkway continued along the side of the milk room and to the garage that was, in earlier years, a carriage house. A set of steps that was once used to step up into the high carriages was by the carriage house when Harris bought the property. Sam Harris Sr. took them with him when he left the farm.

**Carriage steps. Sam Harris Jr. has them now.**

J.B. Harris House, "The LEE House"

The basement was dug all the way, from the rear stairs to the front of the house.  
 "The porch had a brick floor, high off the ground." The porch roof continued along the side of the "milk room" and also covered the steps to the garage.

The garage was a Carriage House. Sam Jr. has the cement steps used to step up into the Carriages. (photo in Harris interview.)



Two rooms, Earliest section of the house, built by Cooper

Long cabinet for the doctor who only used it to store medicines

"When J.B. bought the water tank, it took 20 men to lift it on the wooden stand."

Windows were in basement in the front. J.B. used the lighter area to store sweet potatoes, etc.

Two reliable people described iron rungs on the wall in the basement under the rear of the house. One J.B. Harris grandchild called it "The Dungeon." Corrine Harris never saw this.

Corrine Shovelton, daughter of Sam Harris, Sr. helped with this sketch.

Jan 28, 2005  
 Beverly A. Curry

Sketch of the J.B. Harris House/ Lee House as it is remembered by Corrine Harris Shovelton and Sam Harris Jr.

## Purchase and Move of the Lee House

*Note:* Darwin moved the bottom story, and then the second story, roof, and, last, the back one-story and a half of the house that was built in 1841 by Charity Cooper's second husband, Houston H. Lee. Darwin did not move the section of the house that was the original two-room brick structure, built by James Cooper in 1818, to Madison. Many of the bricks were taken and used to make the walkway under the porches. No basement is under the house in its current location.

Military families lived in the Lee House until 1973. In 1973, the Government sold the historic Lee House and 17 other structures to Surplus, Inc. of Arab, Alabama. The company was required to move the structures within a year. The sale of the Lee House to the surplus company made big news in Huntsville. It was probably at this time the house gained the title "Lee Mansion" in the media. Many of the local people who were interested in historic homes and preservation of them were unhappy with the thought the Lee House would be torn down. John Tyler Darwin and his wife rescued it.

John Tyler Darwin had roots in the land that is now RSA. His grandmother lived south of the Harris farm. The Darwin land was lost to I. Schiffman & Co., Inc. during the Depression. Darwin had known the Lee House all of his life and did not want it to be destroyed.

Darwin started tearing down the chimneys on the Lee House in 1973 and began moving the house shortly thereafter. Darwin moved the bottom story and then the second story, the roof, and then the back one-story and a half. He did not move the original two rooms to Madison, but he did use some of the bricks from the original 1818 home. The bricks for the original house were brought from Chattanooga by flatboat on the Tennessee River to Ditto's Landing, and moved by slaves to the house site.

Darwin had planned to rebuild the old Lee basement, but he changed his mind mid-way through the moving operation. It is probable that the Army later filled in the basement and it is intact beneath the surface. The carriage house, blacksmith shop and all other outbuildings are gone, but the Army has never built on the site.

### **Sam Harris Jr. Comments on the Moving of the J.B. Harris Home/Lee House**

The front of the house was moved but the old part was razed. "That was a crime." Sam Harris said, noting that the Army has never built on the site. His feelings are understandable; however, if it were not for Darwin, the entire structure would be gone.



**Fall of 1941. The Harris family said farewell to property. Above: Corner view shows part of the covered porch that was on the side of the kitchen. Below: The water tank on its platform is visible on the right side of the house. The Army began road construction on the properties before residents moved out. The front yard shows construction disturbance and stakes**



## **The Lee House Today**

The Darwins moved the Lee House to 104 Metaire Lane in Madison. John Tyler Darwin passed away when he was in his eighties, and his wife now resides in Huntsville. The house was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Allen Lacy. Mr. Lacy moved to Madison from a northern state, and said he knew of no family connection to the Lacys in Alabama. In 2005, the Lacys submitted application for the "Lee Mansion" to the Alabama Register for historic homes. At that time, a representative from the AL SHPO office contacted the Redstone Arsenal Staff Archaeologist, seeking information about the house. The researcher was invited to accompany the AL SHPO staff person on a visit to the house, now the residence of the Lacys.

The front of the house faces Metaire Lane and what was once the middle section of the Lee House is abutted to a steep hillside (some local residents would say a mountain). The bricks from the old home site have been used to make brick walkways around the house. Mr. Lacy pointed out one of the bricks in the walkway to the gate which had a well-defined imprint of a large dog's paw. The brick must have once been part of a more sheltered area of the house, to be so well preserved over 160 years later.

The inside of the house is a credit to Darwin's restoration skills. The four front rooms are as described by Corrine Harris, except they are much more elegantly furnished and decorated now than when a farm family lived there. Set as it is, against the hillside, well kept with pristine white paint, it is hard to equate it with its former life, that of a working farm, with an associated blacksmith shop, a number of other outbuildings, turkeys in the yard, and large water tank beside it. The context of the farm has been lost.

## **Listing on the Alabama Register as an Historic House**

An application for nomination to the Alabama Register for historic structures was submitted by the current owners of the house in 2005. The name for the house was submitted as the Lee Mansion. The application submitted to the Alabama Historic Commission dated the house as being constructed from 1820-1840.

The Alabama Register Review Board met in Montgomery, Alabama on March 24, 2005. The Board voted and found the Lee Mansion eligible for the Alabama Register. The period of significance for the Lee House is recorded as 1820-1840. The part of the Cooper/Lee house that dated back to 1820 was the original two-room house built by James Cooper. This old section of the Cooper/Lee House (the Lee Mansion) was razed when the larger section of the house built by Houston Lee was moved from the arsenal. Lee began construction of the section that was moved and is called Lee Mansion in 1841. The period of significance for the Lee Mansion should reflect that date rather than be shown as 1820-1840. Nevertheless, the work of John Tyler Darwin to obtain the house, which he remembered with nostalgia from his past, and to painstakingly restore it must be appreciated, and it is fortunate that the house has current owners who will maintain it.

**THE HARRIS FAMILY: LIFE AT THE BIG HOUSE ("LEE MANSION")  
AND THE HARRIS HOUSE (BUILT BY SAM HARRIS SR.),  
POND BEAT 1920-1941**

The life of the Harris family on the land that was once owned by Charity Cooper began in 1920 when Joseph Brown (J. B.) Harris bought the property from the First National Bank in a foreclosure sale. He farmed 1000 acres on property that extended from North of what is now Buxton Road to the Tennessee River. The road once ran from east to west from Whitesburg Pike (now called Memorial Parkway) in Farley to Triana so it was called the Farley-Triana Road. This was the main road through Pond Beat. Buxton Road was built along the old road for the most part; however, a comparison of old maps with the RSA map shows that the curves were taken out when the new road was built.

J.B. Harris and his family moved into what has been called the Lee House. In this discussion of the Harris tenure on the property, the house will be called the big house, which is what the Harris family and their neighbors called it. It is reasonable to suggest the family may have begun calling it "the big house" instead of just "the house" after another structure was built nearby in 1927.

**The Harris House**



**The Fall of 1941. Sam Sr. and his wife Jennie Harris and their children, Sam Jr., Corrine, and Jimmy pose for a farewell photo in front of the home that Sam Sr. built. Known as the Harris House, it is the only remaining home that is still intact in its original location on Redstone Arsenal.**

According to an article by Ed Peters, in an article in *The Redstone Rocket* dated September 7, 1983, a time when the arsenal was evaluating its historic structures, “old records show that J.B. Harris in 1927 combined two existing buildings, possibly slave quarters, to form the bungalow-type house.” Architectural historians contracted by the Army confirmed that one part of the house was built of hand-hewn logs that probably date back prior to the Civil War, and one of its chimneys is probably of the same era.

The house was reportedly built by J.B. Harris, probably by virtue of it being on his property. However, Sam Harris Jr., who was born in the house, said his father, Sam Harris Sr., built the house. He remembers it being said that the house was built around a log cabin or two. Juanita Lassiter, who married J.B.’s grandson, also said Sam Harris Sr. built the house, saying her husband’s grandfather (J.B.) “acted more as an overseer because of his age at the time.” Since Sam Harris, born in 1892, and would later have a son he would name Sam, he is referred to as Sam Harris Sr. Sam Harris Sr. raised his family in the Harris house. It was renovated in 1938 with the addition of new siding and porches.

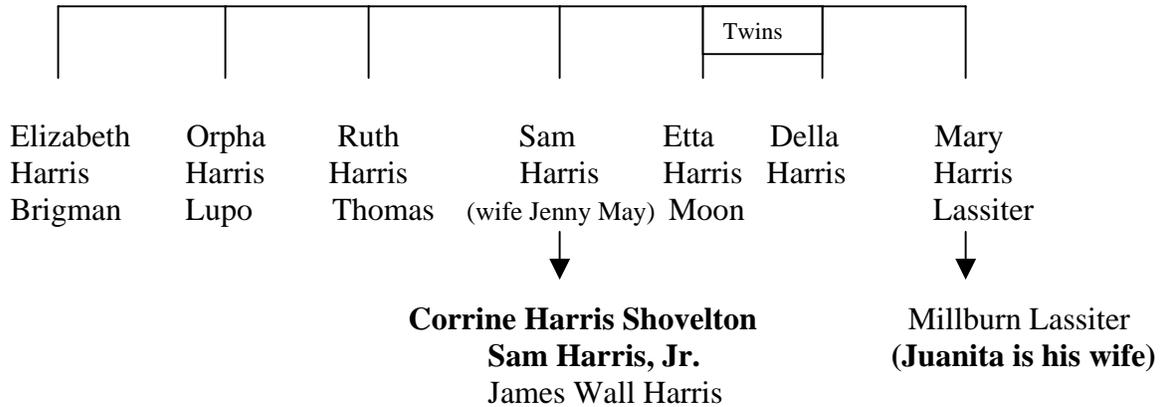
Details about the Harris house are on file at Redstone Arsenal. Designated as Building 8012 by the Army. In 1984, the Army conducted an Historic American Buildings Survey and the structure was classified as a Category III historic property in accordance with Army regulation 420-4.

The Harris House still stands in its original location on Redstone Arsenal. The Army had the house evaluated by architectural historians to determine its historical significance; it was categorized as Class III, the lowest category of structure eligible for nomination to the NRHP. The house was found to be locally unique to its historic era thus it contributed to the understanding of pre-military land use. The Harris House was considered distinctive because at the time it was one of the three remaining pre-Army structures. However, of the other two, the Chaney House (renamed the Goddard house by the Army) was no longer in its original location (see the Chaney section), and the Lee House, which was later owned by the Harris family, was partially razed and moved from the arsenal by a civilian buyer. The architectural review of the Harris House and a record of changes made to it by the Army are on file at the arsenal.

## **THE HARRIS FAMILY AND THEIR LIFE ON THE FARM**

Sam Harris Jr. (born in 1930), the grandson of J.B. and Martha Rogers Harris, with his wife and his son present, was first visited by the researcher on January 28, 2001. He said his grandparents had six daughters, including one set of twins, and one son, Sam. The girls were Orpy, Lupo, Mary (married a Lassiter), Lizzie, Ruth, Etta, and Della. The latter two were the twins. In 2005, when the researcher visited the home of Sam Jr. for the second time, his wife and son, as well as his sister, Corrine Shovelton and her husband were present. The following family diagram was drawn with the assistance of Corrine:

**Joseph Brown (J.B.) Harris (1860-1939) and Martha Rogers Smith**



J.B. and Martha did have other grandchildren, however, those shown and highlighted are the ones interviewed.

**The Interview of Juanita White Lassiter**

When the researcher arrived to interview Mrs. Lassiter, it was expected she would be alone with her caregiver. However, Ima Jean Moon, another J.B. Harris granddaughter, and Juanita’s daughter Ann were there as well. Many people talked at once. Since one can gently and persistently request, but one cannot order people about when one is a guest, this was not possible to control. The tape recording of the visit was not useful, but the researcher did make notes. Due to being tasked with other duties at the arsenal, researcher ceased interviewing shortly after visiting Mrs. Lassiter. By 2005, Juanita Lassiter, who was by then 93 years of age, had suffered a stroke, and the family advised contact would not be productive.

Juanita White was born in 1912 in Cathport, TN. Her grandfather ran a store there. Her family moved to Ethel (Tennessee?) when she was about four years old. She had seven brothers and one sister. When she was about 13 years old, her family moved to Huntsville, and then to Pond Beat. Juanita commented that Pond Beat got its name because of the many ponds in the area, especially after it rained. In the wintertime her brothers cut holes in them so they could fish, “and the catfish would come pouring out of the hole!”

Juanita probably lived on the Harris property. Bill White, who was interviewed, said he lived there with his parents in one of the three worker’s houses that were on the south side of the Farley-Triana Road, south of the J.B. Harris House. Bill said his father, who worked on the Harris farm, was Juanita’s brother.

Juanita said on Sunday nights, she and her brothers went to church, the Methodist Church (Parcel D-159), which was less than a mile to the east. They walked, stopping along the

way to gather people, and by the time they got to the church, most of the people would be tagging along in their group. Juanita is older than Edith Woodward Price, who described the church as she remembered it (see Edith Price interview). Edith described a declining congregation, but the church was apparently more active in earlier years. James Long (see James Long interview) said it was Sam Harris Sr. who cut the lumber on his place to build the church, and the men of the community helped to build it.

Juanita remembered Stella Tolbert McWhorter had property (D-166) that abutted the church. She said there was a cemetery on the property that had one existing tombstone and mostly unmarked graves. The RSA Cemetery Map indicates no cemetery has been identified on the property described by Juanita. Juanita said the farm was owned by the Butchers prior to the McWhorters.

[Note: In viewing pages of the 1880 census that listed the Woodward family, the researcher noticed the name Butcher. A Betty Butcher, age 31, was living in the household of William Jamar, listed as a cousin. In 1882 Betty Butcher married Charles Woodward, who would have then been 27 years of age. In 1880 he had resided with his widowed mother, Susan Bell Woodward.]

Juanita said there was a large black cemetery that was still being used. Black farm hands and servants were still being buried there. She said it was located in back of Charlie Costin's (sp?) place. James Long mentioned "old man Charlie Costin worked for Sam Harris Sr. for all those years," so it is probable that he lived on Harris land.

Juanita mentioned there was also a church for the Black people, which was where their family servant, Cleo, went. She couldn't remember a last name for Cleo. She said "Uncle Joe" Timmons was the preacher at that church. He lived on a farm close by and had many children. She said the name Timmons Hill came from the Timmons family (who were White) and the Timmons plantation, and she noted that the Wilsons lived in a two-story house with columns on Timmons Hill. He owned a gin in Farley.

Millburn Lassiter was a grandson of J.B. Harris (Mary's son). He came down from Tennessee to his grandfather's farm, "driving a cultivator and two horses." Juanita said she first met him there in a corncrib. She was either with her brother or her mother's brother at the time. Juanita and Millburn married when Juanita was 22 or 23 years of age, and Millburn was 24. They were married at the Methodist Church.

At first, they lived in a little frame sharecropper house. Juanita said, "There was a grist house between our house and Grandpa's." Juanita estimated the distance between their house and the big house was about a city block. She said the blacksmith shop was "on the other side of the big house," and "you couldn't see it from our house." The yard went down the slope of the hill to shops and sheds.

Juanita and her husband had no running water or electricity in the sharecropper house they lived in. They had a kerosene refrigerator, used oil lamps, and went to the big house, for water. After their oldest daughter Hilda was born, Juanita and Millburn lived in the big house with Millburn's grandparents. Ima Jean, granddaughter of J.B. and

Martha, was living in the big house, too. Juanita remembers the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) people boarding at the Big house while she lived there. (According to Sam Harris Jr., TVA acquired about 200 acres of the Harris property.) She thought maybe the “CCC people” (Civilian Conservation Corps) people had stayed there at one time, too. She remembered a lot of boarders staying with the family.

Juanita said the family kept a bottle of quinine in the middle of the kitchen table to take every day. This was used to “fight off” malaria. She said mosquitoes were quite a problem in Pond Beat before TVA drained off some of the areas where they bred.

Juanita said Martha Harris had an ash hopper through which rain water would be drained. This produced lye, which is the main ingredient in homemade soap. Martha made liquid soap in big iron kettles and it would be used for laundry in the washhouse. She said the washhouse was part of the old slave quarters and was located off the back porch and joined to the house. There was a fireplace in it. Juanita said:

Go upstairs, off the back porch, it was connected to the house, and it was in back of the kitchen. Up stairs were two rooms. The first room had bars sticking out with chains [later described as stocks]. The second room was entirely dark. Neither room had windows, although the first room had a skylight. It was used to detain slaves that were being punished.

The validity of Juanita’s story is not known, but she told it with certainty. Her description fit the two rooms that were the original section of the house. It is feasible that after the front section of the house was built by Lee in 1841, the two rooms in the rear, which had been the first structure built, became quarters for slaves who served in the household. Corrine Harris Shovelton said servants who worked for the Harris family stayed in the two rooms. This was described earlier in the description of the house. Corrine, who is many years younger than Juanita, said she did not know of any room where slaves were kept.

Sarah Malaspina, a Huntsville resident who retired from working for the DOD on RSA many years ago remembers going with officials from Building 112 at RSA to look at the house before it was sold. She remembers going down the stairs into the basement. She said there were metal pieces on the wall. She said she remembered thinking because of their height and placement, they appeared to be what shackles would have been attached to in order to chain slaves to the wall. It is probable that shackles were used during the time Charity Cooper owned the plantation. The following advertisement was published in the *Huntsville Democrat*, June 16, 1838:

**TEN DOLLARS REWARD. Ranaway from the subscriber, a negro woman named Sally, about 21 years of age, taking along her two children—one three years, and the other seven months old. These Negroes were PURCHASED BY ME at the sale of George Mason’s negroes, on the first Monday in May, and left *a few days* thereafter. Any person delivering them to the jailor in Huntsville, or to me, at**

**my plantation, five miles above Triana, on the Tennessee river, shall receive the above reward. CHARITY COOPER**

It is reasonable to assume that runaway slaves who were returned to a plantation would be shackled.

The researcher asked Juanita about foods that were grown on the farm and what a typical meal had been. Juanita said they had a lot of farm grown vegetables, fish, and chicken. They grew lots of food: cantaloupes, watermelons, green string beans, corn, okra, tomatoes, sugar cane, and cotton. She said, “We had pear trees in the yard. Cotton was the big cash crop.” They didn’t suffer too much during the Great Depression because they could grow everything they needed. A typical lunch during those times was a pot of field peas and cornbread.

Juanita said “Uncle Dave” Barley (his wife’s name was “Aunt Rhodie”) was a Black man who lived “across from where “Auntie May” lived:

He made molasses from the sugar cane for the whole community. He lived to the east near a big pond. The farmers in the community would cut their cane and take it to Uncle Dave. He would have mule teams drag a large millstone over the cane, getting the juice into large vats. Uncle Dave would stir the juice in the vats [over a fire] until molasses was made.

The Barleys, of course, were not Juanita’s relatives. The terms Aunt and Uncle were terms of address for Black people. David Barley’s name was mentioned by a number of people who were interviewed, always in positive terms. He owned Parcel D-173, on the north side of the Farley-Triana Road (Buxton); it was right above the Arthur C. Turner’s store.

Juanita also described “California Beer,” non-alcoholic brew made from sugar cane seeds that were obtained during the molasses-making process. She said:

You put the seed mush into a five-gallon churn with water and syrup. Work the churn, and then ferment the concoction for a couple of days. Empty the churn and bottle it up. It was made by everyone, especially in the days before soft drinks. You could only make what you could drink, because it would cause the bottles to explode if you left it too long.

Juanita said her husband had a dog. He was an English bulldog, and her husband named him Lindy after Charles A. Lindberg. In the summer Millburn went out in a boat on one of the ponds. It was a socializing place for young people. She said that the dog jumped out of the boat and forced Millburn out into the middle of the pond, “in front of everyone.” Everyone laughed and had good sport with that.

## **Corrine Harris Shovelton**

Corrine Harris Shovelton (born in 1928) is the daughter of Sam Harris Sr., the older sister of Sam Jr. Corrine said her mother met her father (Sam. Sr.) because her mother's brother was living at the home of J.B. Harris.

They had no electricity on the Harris farm, and in their house they used oil lamps and kept kerosene heaters. They had a kerosene refrigerator. For water they went to her grandfather's house. Corrine said the gristmill was located between their house and her grandfather's house. The blacksmith shop was on the other side of her grandfather's house. It went down hill to shops and sheds.

In the mid-1930s, it cost about \$3.00 to get a "hand basket" of white shirts washed and ironed. A Black woman, "Aunt Betty Timmons," came to do the washing. She came on washday and took the clothes down to Corrine's grandfather's house to wash.

Aunt Betty boiled the white clothes. She moved away about five miles. We took the clothes to her at Joe Timmons' [house]. She was still doing our things when I went to college. The Jacobs lived near there. They were well-to-do [the Jacobs families were Black].

Mother [Jennie Harris] didn't know how to do anything, like ironing. She did most of the cooking. She had somebody to do the dish washing and cleaning. Uncle Jim [she thinks his last name was Tootleman], Aunt Betty's brother-in-law, watched the cooking. We had a big meal in the middle of the day. He always did dish washing. He was real patient. When we were little, we'd want to wash dishes, and he'd do them then put them in our pan. Aunt Millie was his wife's (Betty's) sister. She was kind of grumpy. Aunt Betty left us [died] a few years back.

Corrine said her grandmother (wife of J.B. Harris) had a Black woman who came after breakfast, dinner, and supper [to clean up]. "We didn't call the noon meal 'lunch.' You never heard it called that." The woman also came on Sunday afternoons. Corrine remembered one time during the holidays:

I was going from our house to the blacksmith shop. Cleo [her grandmother's maid] was trying to cut the head off a turkey. I didn't help her much. I was scared of turkeys. Grandmother Harris raised turkeys. They were running around. Grandmother could doctor them—inoculate them. They had cows and horses, too.

She described her grandfather, J.B. Harris, as being a witty man with dark busy eyebrows. She said he tried to help people do better. He was originally from around Chattanooga. He lived in the big house until about 1936. He died in 1938. Corrine

shared with the researcher a photograph of herself on the stairway at her grandfather's house the night of her high school prom.



**Corrine Harris standing on the stairs at the home of her grandfather J.B. Harris the night of her high school prom. The stairs and the landing above, which is illustrated in the inset photo of Corrine with her brothers, probably look the same as they did when the Lees built the house.**

### **Bill J. White (Juanita Lassiter was his Father's Sister)**

Bill White grew up on Harris property, across the road from the big house of J.B. Harris and the Harris House. He said Jimmy Harris, Sam Jr.'s younger brother and he were best friends.

Bill's father sharecropped on the J.B. Harris property. He said his sister Millie was born on Nov. 1939 on "Pendleton Place." A rough sketch was made as Bill described the house where he lived and the location of neighbors. The sketch shows "Aunt" Millie and "Uncle" Jim's house. Their last name was Tootlum. These are the Black people Corrine described as working for her mother (Mrs. Sam Harris Jr.). Bill commented:

Aunt Millie let us [boys] smoke rabbit tobacco. All the kids used to smoke it. There were fields with a lot of sage. It was among the sage. It had long leaves, like a peach tree leaf. There was some similarity.

The house where Bill lived faced the Farley-Triana Road (to the north). It had two rooms of equal size in the front. Beds were in both of those rooms, but one of them served primarily as the living room. Behind those two rooms was one long room, which served as the kitchen.

They had no barn. Behind the house, maybe 60 feet back, was the outhouse. It was set over a dug pit, and it had one hole. Asked if the family ever dumped any of their trash in it, Bill said, “No, people didn’t do that.”

The Broiles’ house is also shown. Bill said they had a two-story, antebellum style house. They had a two-seater outhouse and a barn. In 1939 a man from Indiana bought Broiles place. He was said to be a Republican: “Everybody wanted to see a Republican. None of the farmers had seen a Republican before 1939.”

In addition to sharecropping, Bill’s father drove the school bus that Bill rode. White children from Pond Beat went to Farley School on Whitesburg Pike (now called Memorial Parkway). The current Farley elementary school is in that location. When he went to school, there was a two-room wooden schoolhouse for grades 1 and 2, and a brick building for middle school, grades 3 through 9.

Bill said he was one of Lilly Latham’s first students, and “If you missed a word, you got a slap on the cheek.” Mrs. Gardner was also a teacher there. She was widowed. Her son Charles was Bill’s buddy. The principal was P.R. Ivy. Bill said P.R. Ivy bought a farm, so that was P.R. Ivy property. As a slow grin slipped across his face, he said, “You see, Privy Property.” [Note: It can be surmised that back in those days, when people used the “privy” (outhouse), the principal’s name lent itself to student creativity.] P.R. Ivy is shown as owning Parcel A-26, which bordered what is now called Jordan Lane. This could be the location of the farm he bought.

When asked about family recreation, Bill said they listened to the radio. He said his parents had a big radio that was connected to a battery. On Saturday night they’d turn the radio on and listen to the Grand Old Opry. On Friday night, they listened to boxing matches. He recalled sitting out on the porch and listening to the fight between Joe Lewis and Max Smelling. Smelling whipped Lewis: “By the time Mamma got the coffee made, the fight was over.” In 1939 they listened to the war news on the radio—the Germans invading Poland.

Bill commented that sometimes he went to Triana: “You had to walk across a swinging bridge to get to Triana.” He noted that Wheeler might have been Pin Hook Creek.

### **The Farm, Discussed by Sam Harris Jr.**

The Harris farm lost a significant number of acres of bottomland in 1935 through forced sale to TVA. Joseph B. Harris died in 1939. At the time of sale to the War Department,

Sam Harris Sr. was the owner of the farm, and it consisted of Parcels D-167, where the farmstead with its homes and outbuildings were located, and D-191, a smaller parcel down closer to the river. The War Department bought 1000 acres from Sam Harris Sr. Etta Harris Francis owned Parcel D-192 on the south side of Farley-Triana Road, bordering Stella Tolbert McWhorter's property.

Sam Harris Jr. was born and grew up living in the house his father built (the Harris house), which was built directly across from the house of his grandparents Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Harris, who lived in the big house that has also been referred to as the Lee house, after its original owners. The Harris house, which Sam Sr. built, had two fireplaces, and Sam Harris Jr. said he had to bring wood in for them. In the winter he sometimes slept by the fireplace in the living room, because they had no electricity and no heat. The family's water came from a well at his grandfather's house. The water was piped from a well to the tank that had been put up on a wooden platform at the side of his grandfather's house, and the water flowed by gravity to the house.

Mosquitoes were a problem on the farm, as they were for everyone else in Pond Beat. Sam Jr. said his mother gave him a dose of Grove's Chill Tonic every morning so he wouldn't get malaria.

In addition to the big house and the Harris House, Sam Jr. said there were 10 or so other houses "on the place." Tenant farmers lived in them. Sam Sr. had about 1,000 acres, 600 of which were in cotton, corn and other crops. The Harris family provided the land and the mules. Individual families worked the Harris land. Sam Harris Sr. paid for half the cost of seeds and fertilizer; in return, he received half the crop when it was harvested.

Sam Jr. said his father had a blacksmith shop and a steam driven mill where he cut lumber. He said his father always worked hard. Additional comments about Sam Sr. and his blacksmith shop are presented under the heading entitled "Walter Joiner Discusses Sam Harris Sr." at the end of this section.

Sam Jr. said his father had the best fishing hole around. When he went out to the arsenal, he saw the Army had built the Missile Command finance and accounting building near where the pond had been. Sam Sr. built some wooden boats, and Sam Jr. rented them to people who came and wanted to go out on the pond to fish. This was probably the pond where Juanita Lassiter said her husband went out with his dog Lindy in the boat.

Sam Sr. must have truly been a busy man. Aside from milling lumber, working in his blacksmith shop, and raising cotton, from the interview conducted by Lane Lambert over twenty years ago for the September 12, 1984 edition of *The Redstone Rocket*, Sam Harris Jr. revealed: "My father was pretty much a truck farmer and had 10 or 15 acres in cantaloupes" and was known as Madison County's 'Cantaloupe King,'"

Lambert interviewed Sam Jr. while they were slowly driving through the area that was once Pond Beat. When they passed the Arsenal Yacht Club, Sam commented, "That was a good piece of cotton ground." He wanted to see the old sawmill pond where his father had the steam-powered mill, but the dirt track that led to the water was barred by a gate. The rocket and laser firing range was on the other side. When they turned back on Buxton Road, Sam saw a large oak tree. That was where he and his brothers had been chased by a swarm of bumblebees when they were boys. Sam Jr. looked at the tree and found a small metal identification plate on the trunk. It was officially Tree No. 56.



**Sam Harris Jr. visited the home his father built where he was born and raised. He holds the photograph of his family on the porch of the house as they bade it farewell. Photo source: *The Huntsville Times*, September 2, 1984.**

According to Lambert, Sam "pointed toward the fenced-in munitions storage building just off the Redstone Arsenal road" and said, "Now I believe that was where the old store was." Then Sam added, "The Methodist church was over there," pointing to an open field on the opposite side of the road. Sam Jr. added that it was different "back then" because "what wasn't farmland and pasture was woodland and swamp." [Note: One correction is warranted. The road described is not Redstone Arsenal road. It is the old Farley-Triana highway, now called Buxton Road.]

In an August 22, 1984 article in *The Redstone Rocket*, "Harris family", p. 3, Sam Harris commented about leaving the farm:

When the family sold the farm for \$75 per acre they and others forced to sell to the Army received the going rate for farmland in the area, Harris said, but no allowance was made for the difficulty of having to move all the equipment and livestock of a large farming operation and reestablish a farm elsewhere.

It was a tremendous injustice to the people down there. They paid them fair market value for land being put up for sale at that particular time but what they didn't pay you for was the hardship and adverse circumstances

they put you under. It really wound some of the people up,” Harris recalls.

Further, he continued, the price of farm land elsewhere in the county went up as much as 20 percent as a result of the seller’s market created by the Army transactions and those who had to move off the arsenal had to pay inflated prices when they bought new farms.

Harris acknowledges that he’s “a little bitter” because the family land “that they ran us off of” is being put to no use that he can see. “In my humble opinion the bulk of that old place is being wasted,” the farmer said.

He hopes though, that the Army will preserve his old home. “It has sentimental value to me. I was physically born in that house,” he said.

### **James Long Discusses the Harris Farm**

James Long said:

Millburn Lassiter lived there [in the big house/Lee House]. He grew lots of sweet potatoes. The problem was he didn’t know how to keep them. When you pick one up, you’re supposed to use it. Picking it and storing it dislocates the sugar in it. They got potato houses now. Millburn put them in the basement. The basement ran all the way under the house, and he put them on one end, filled it up, with sweet potatoes. He put in a heater run by coal oil, run at a certain temperature, until the sweet potatoes dried out. Then he’d take them to the market. He’d dig in September or October then have them ready to go by Thanksgiving.

Long remembered that John Blackburn (a White man) worked for Sam Sr. Blackburn was a sharecropper. Sam furnished him mules and he got half what he grew. (It has been said that Sam split the cost of seed and fertilizer with the sharecropper[.]) Blackburn had eleven children. Long’s sister Inez married one of the boys, Jessie, in about 1940.

Long said the house the Blackburns lived in was rough lumber, plank, about 12 inches wide. The planks went up and down, and 3-inch strips were nailed over the crack between the boards. The roof was tin. Inside the house, the walls were papered with heavy wallpaper. It was a heavy color, and it had no pattern. The house where Blackburns lived had five rooms.

Long said the landlord put up the paper. Once the walls in a sharecropper house were papered, it was there for awhile. They didn’t put up new paper in sharecropper houses when families moved in and out. Sharecropper houses were usually two-room shotgun house. Sometimes rooms were added on. They had a front porch. People slept in the

front room and cooked in the back one. If they didn't have enough beds, they put down pallets on the floor wherever they could.

James Long's mother told him about Dr. Russell who was once in the big house on the Harris land. His Mama said Dr. Russell kept his medicine in a cabinet. That cabinet was still in the kitchen part (midsection) of the house. Dr. Russell made rounds from house to house on his horse. James said, "He was an old man when I was a little boy. Daddy was born in 1896, and the doctor was an old man then. He doctored Black people and White people. He had Blacks in one place and Whites in another in Huntsville Hospital."

Long remembered J.B. Harris' granddaughter Imogene Moon living in the Big house. He said she was strict with the children. She said, "Live right and do right." He remembered Sam Sr. "carried on a lot of joking."

Another memory of Long was stacking hay. He said he and his daddy, all the men, were stacking hay. It was after he and his wife Nell got married. He said it "like to broke me in two" (over backward). That was the first time he ever heard it called "stacking" hay.

### **Walter Cooney Penland Reminisces**

Writer Ed Peters accompanied Walter Cooney Penland in 1983 when he visited the area on Redstone Arsenal that was his "old neighborhood." Penland was born in 1902. The newspaper article Peters wrote about this visit was published in the November 2, 1983 edition of *The Redstone Rocket* and titled "Former arsenal resident visits old home place." Penland's reminiscences about his own former homeplace and community are presented in the next section of this manuscript. However, the paragraphs Ed Peters wrote about Penland's stop at the "old Lee home" are presented here:

The Penlands' visit to the arsenal also included a stop at the site of the old Lee home, which stood on Buxton Road until about 1975. That home belonged to Walter Cooney Penland's great aunt, and his father, "D.A.", had been born there.

The Lee home was one mile west of the Penland place and Walter Cooney remembers going there many times in his younger years to see his relatives.

"The house," he said, had 8 rooms and was built in "slave times." His great aunt owned more than 1,000 acres, and prior to the Civil War owned many slaves. Penland said.

After the war many blacks remained in the area and lived and worked on the Penland farm and other farms. There were numerous black land owners in the area, some of whom amassed large farms.

Penland's memories confirm that ownership and presence of slaves on the property continued from the time when Charity Cooper was the landowner until the Civil War and that after the war and their resulting freedom, many of the former slaves remained. This supports the contention that residents of Pond Beat and other the communities were, for the most part, former slaves and their descendants.

Unfortunately, during the interview Walter Penland did not comment on the very small cemetery (one cemetery marker) on the property. It is shown on the Army Cemetery Map as the Penland/Cooper Cemetery. Research pertaining to the cemeteries, which also includes details on the Penland family, can be found in Madison, Alabama historian John P. Rankin's research that he presented to RSA on CD's entitled *The Cemeteries of Redstone Arsenal*.

### **Walter Joiner Discusses Sam Harris Sr.**

Walter Joiner is a very intelligent, outspoken Black man in his eighties (see interview). When the researcher talked with him, he said he'd "tell it like it was" and gave specific examples of unfair acts White people perpetuated against Blacks. He also told of another White man he remembered well.

Sam Harris [Sr.] always had something going in his shop. I'd go there and see him and crank the bellows and watch while he worked the forge. I'd stay maybe half a day. I was curious. On his gristmill he made a spider gear out of wood. [What's a spider gear?] That's a smaller wheel inside to mesh in the larger one. He made whatever he wanted out of wood or steel. He made rakes to smooth ground with. He drug them on the ground to break up clods.

[Can you describe the rakes?] They were 16 feet wide. He'd heat long spikes, have a hole drilled in the timber. The spike would burn itself in and wedge. The spikes would usually stand up or be tilted, but he'd put a lever on it. The spikes are set in a small, 6 x 6 log, with a lever of oak, hardwood. He'd notch so far every other log and stagger the hole, so he wouldn't have two spikes dragging in the same place.

He had another fellow who ran his gristmill sometimes. He treated his help good, so he could depend on them. He had a son, Sam Jr. He was much younger than I.

Sam Harris had a steam engine sawmill. Most old plantation owners had their own. Old man Sam stopped using his and had an old, big tractor with a belt drive. He used the tractor to run the gristmill. Each tractor had a power take off on the side where each wheel was. He could park it and block. Anybody who brought logs, he'd cut for a percentage. Everything was a barter system. People had everything but cash money.

The sawmill was on a side road close to the house. It was about a half-mile on down the hill to the house [J.B. Harris House]. That was the old [slave] quarters road. It goes all the way back down to the river.

Walter Joiner continued:

People brought corn to him [Sam Sr.], too. If you didn't want to wait for your corn to be ground, he'd weigh yours and give you meal (a percentage) from what was already ground. He used a scoop about the size of a gallon bucket and put it in a bag. Some scoops had a curved grip. The box was waist high, so it wasn't necessary to bend.

Sam had a big shed where he worked close to the big house [J.B. Harris/Lee house]. It had one big room and a little kitchen leaned off. It was made of rough slab lumber (with saw marks, second cut) about 1 x 12 with 1 by 4's to cover the cracks. Board and batten.

Blacks kept to themselves, but Sam Harris had more communication with people than anyone else because he had so much equipment.

Sam had a combine and a hay bailer. When he did the hay, he'd bring the bailer up, take the wheels off and block it so it was stationary. The hay would feed into the hopper. Lay the hay on a slide. You have to shock the hay on a pole so it will dry out before you bale it or it will mold. The hay was cut flat with the 16-foot wide hay rake. You'd pull it up and stack it around a framed [braced] 8-ft. long pole in the ground, using the slide or runner. When you got done it was a three-sided pyramid. The hay would stay like that until spring without rotting.

Sometimes when you stacked up hay like that you put logs around it. The cows would eat so much, they'd eat a hole in it. Some people paid him by the bale to do their hay. His bales were heavy, maybe 100 pounds.

Sam grew sweet potatoes. He got me into growing them. He had them in the basement of the big house. Many people who had household slaves, they stayed in the basement. The big house had a basement and a brick floor, like the old house on Adams Avenue. The bars are still on the windows. Sam started me growing sweet potatoes. He'd take them by the truckload to the commodities exchange. He'd take some of mine.

Sam planted peas and sorghum, too. [Here Joiner talked about taking the sorghum to Dave Barley.]

Old man Sam would help anybody who was trying to do. During the time I stayed in town to go to school, I'd go home [mother, Parthenia Joiner Horton, Parcels F-251 and Parcel F-253] to work on weekends. He never

said anything, but on Fridays when I had to get home, he would look for me, and on Monday mornings, he'd blow his horn, and I'd get out on the road.

In his adult life, Walter had a college degree and had worked in building construction for TVA, as well as taught shop. Hired to do a job for the then elderly Sam Harris Sr., Walter recalled being offered lunch. One of the women brought a plate of food outside to him. He said, "Old man Sam looked at the woman and ordered, 'Let the man sit at the table. You only serve dogs outside.'"

Walter Joiner, now past 80 years old himself, meant no disrespect in calling Sam Harris Sr. "old man Sam." He was doing this to differentiate between Sam Harris Sr. and his son, who is about ten years younger than Walter himself.

Walter's remembrances of Sam Harris Sr. create a glimpse in history. They show Sam Harris Sr. was a thinking man, a man who used ingenuity in crafting implements that would enable him to more efficiently perform farming tasks, a man who worked hard, and a man who was willing to help others who were striving. He allowed a Black youth to come to his shop regularly, and seeing the young man's interest and desire to learn, he shared information about what he was doing.

White people did not socialize with Black people in those days. Sam Sr. did not discuss helping the young man to get home from school in Huntsville on the weekends to work his mother's farm and then get back to school on Monday mornings. He simply always appeared at the right time and place to offer a ride. When the researcher mentioned to the Harris family that Sam Harris had helped Walter Joiner get to school and back, they knew nothing about this, and Corrine appeared doubtful about the information. The researcher suggests that Sam Harris Sr. was not a deeply prejudiced man, but he conformed to the customs of the day, thus, his role as mentor to a Black youth was done quietly and with discretion, in order to facilitate life for both of them.

### **Conclusions about the Harris Farmstead**

Parcel D-167 was a thriving farm. As J.B. Harris grew older in years, his son Sam Harris took over the responsibility of the farm. He was an honest man who helped his neighbors, ran a gristmill, had a blacksmith shop, made innovations and improvements in farming equipment, and cut logs. Others in the community came to the farm to, among other things, get their milling done and hire the Harris equipment and/or labor. The interviews also give insight to the households of the Harris house and the old Lee house, where J.B. and the extended Harris family resided with their hired help, and neighbors.



**WESLEY THOMAS**  
Interviewed July 2005



We were farmers all our lives. There were nine of us. One girl passed away as an infant, so there were four boys and four girls. I was in the middle, born August 9, 1913. *Wesley Thomas.*

Wesley Thomas was visited in the home of his son, John Thomas. He wanted to tell about his life and how he came to move to the land that is now the arsenal. His story provides insight to life as it was in the 1930's. Many of those who came to rent or sharecrop on the arsenal may have had stories similar to his. This is the story of Wesley Thomas as he told it:

The Thomas clan lived all around Spring Valley. When I was in junior high there, we made a deal with the school to cut the firewood one summer. We cut the wood for winter, for \$1 a cord. I was going to have some Christmas money.

I had an older sister married and lived in Tuscumbia. She worked at Lucille's Beauty Parlor. She was a Mrs. Mitchell. She said, "Go by Lucille's and get a doll for Ruby Shelton Thomas." After getting my shoes half soled, I like to wore them out that day.

I walked to town. I got me some cartridges for my pistol [fire crackers], went by Lucille's and told them about the doll. "It's at my house," she said." Fine with me. It was far out there to her house. So I said, "Fine with me," because I'd already walked 12 miles to Tuscumbia, and I went home.

Mother was at the door. I guess she saw me coming. I told her the circumstances. She said, "Well, I guess that baby won't have anything for Santa Claus to bring her tonight."

The woman lived out on the far edge of town. I walked back 13 or 14 miles that night.

### **The Move to Limestone County**

We moved to Limestone County to the old Mason Farm where the nuclear plant is in 1932. We were about to starve to death. Then there was an old gent down at Littleville who rented the farm. He'd done pretty good in lumber, so he rented the Mason farm for 60 bales of cotton, and he subleased it [to us].

He financed us. Every week my mother sent him a list of groceries we needed. When we sold the crop, we'd give him a fourth.

A couple of gentlemen had bought farmland, 3000 acres in Limestone County, from First National Bank in Birmingham. He leased 1,500 acres of it. Mr. Swinea had the other 1,500 acres that he rented. [...and this neighbor had a daughter, who Wesley met and married.]

Wesley and his wife were married on Christmas Eve in 1936. Wesley was 23 years old and his bride was 19.

They had been married for two years. Wesley's father was the owner of the livestock and equipment, but Wesley had assumed the responsibility of the farm:

I rented it from Lowery. During this time they built the Wilson Dam. Nobody had any electricity around the Tri-City, which is what Tuscumbia, Sheffield, and Florence were called then. Muscle Shoals was called that because up above where the dam was built, you could walk across the river. It would go dry.

I anticipated the need to go to college, but I was the oldest child at home. My younger brother Cullen Thomas and sisters Ruby and Annie Glen, they were young. I handled them like they were mine.

I wanted to go to college, but I couldn't get a nickel for anything. There were two boys for every job in college.

John Wesley said he and his young wife Edith didn't plan to have any children because they weren't prepared financially. So he "went to pushing the mules." Things don't always go as planned. John Thomas was born November 15, 1937. Wesley said, "He [the baby] wore blisters on his feet to get there in time for the wedding." (As a note, John was born 11 months after the wedding.) Wesley commented, "John was born in the shadow of Brown's Ferry."

Wesley explained why he left Limestone County:

Nelson Glass had a furnishing store, and he furnished homes all around Limestone County. Glass was just an old hand. He took a liking to me. He suggested I rent some more land from him and he'd buy me a tractor.

Man, I was in 7<sup>th</sup> Heaven when I thought I'd get a tractor instead of them mules. We had six mules. He said I could trade in those mules on a tractor and he would pay the difference. I would owe nobody but him.

I looked at the John Deere dealer in Morgan County. He heard about me wanting a tractor. In November when we finished harvesting, sometime in November, he and his boys loaded a tractor on a truck in Decatur, on what was supposed to be my farm at Brown's Ferry. I traded him old mules. Four were twenty years old. That was the down payment on the tractor, the plow, the harrow, and the cultivator—one-third of the payment.

We got in his car. We drove up to Nelson's office about 4 o'clock in the evening. I told him the details [the tractor deal]. McBride wanted his

money. I didn't have any money. So I said, "I done what Mr. Nelson told me to do. He's done took my mules to Decatur."

Nelson said, "Well, he can bring them back, can't he?"

I said, "Yes, I guess so, and you can take your land and go to Hell."

Wesley Thomas said he found out later that even though Nelson told him to get the tractor of his choice, Nelson's friend Pete Estes had an Alice Chalmers dealership that he wanted him to buy from.

About that time, Wesley Thomas got word from his wife's uncle about a place.

Mr. Dobbins, my wife's uncle, said he had an interest in the Darnell place, and he'd be glad to rent it. Mr. Dobbins carried me up there and showed me the farm.

### **The Move to Madison County**

Wesley Thomas described the move:

While we were moving, somewhere around the dam [Wilson Dam], I saw Roosevelt in a parade. Henry Ford was in the process of trying to buy the dam. It was never approved. He wanted to do manufacturing in the Shoals. They went so far [in planning for the purchase of the land] that there is a place east of the Shoals called Ford City.

We moved the family. The McCormick boys, farmers nearby, had a couple of trucks. I hired them to help me move.

Spraggins was president of the First National Bank then. He died and Mr. Lowery became president of the bank. Lowery bought it from Holmes who was one of the first men who originally owned it. They were land speculators—Jeff Terry, W.I. Dobbins, S.O. Holmes. Dobbins was from Limestone County. Holmes son owned Holmes Furniture Store and they had their offices in the furniture store.

**The Property of J.E. Whitaker (C-99).** The parcel to which the Thomas family moved is a large parcel (C-99) that was owned by J.E. Whitaker. Thomas said Whitaker didn't live on the land he owned. The land was farmed by renters and share croppers. Richard Darnell was the foreman who oversaw the land for Whitaker. This was once part of the old Shreve Plantation.

The land owned by Whitaker was comprised of 350 acres at the base of Madkin Mountain. Much of the land was in slope. On the north side, up to the mountain, the land was rocky and rough. Wesley used it for pasture.

Wesley commented that there was a cobbled road around Madkin Mountain to Jordan Lane.

### **The Houses**

Wesley said there were three or four houses on the land.

**The Best House.** Wesley said:

The best house was where we moved my mother and father and the rest of the kids. It had four rooms and a front porch. There was a barn, chicken coop, and a smoke house. A big system was right outside the back door to catch rainwater. It was on the first bench of the mountain.

This house was clapboard, flat boards that overlapped. It had a tin roof. It faced to the south. There were two bedrooms in the front, and a hall was between them. The fireplace was in the “west end.” Two rooms were built, one after the other behind the bedroom on the west side. The third room back was the kitchen. The hallway that was between the two bedrooms in the front opened to a porch that ran along the two rooms that extended out in the back. A magnolia tree was near the house.

The cistern was in the space right behind the bedroom that had no rooms built behind it. Wesley said the water was hard and soap wouldn’t lather. They tried to soften it by using water softener bought from the Watkins peddler who came around. There was a mountain spring nearby where the families also obtained water.

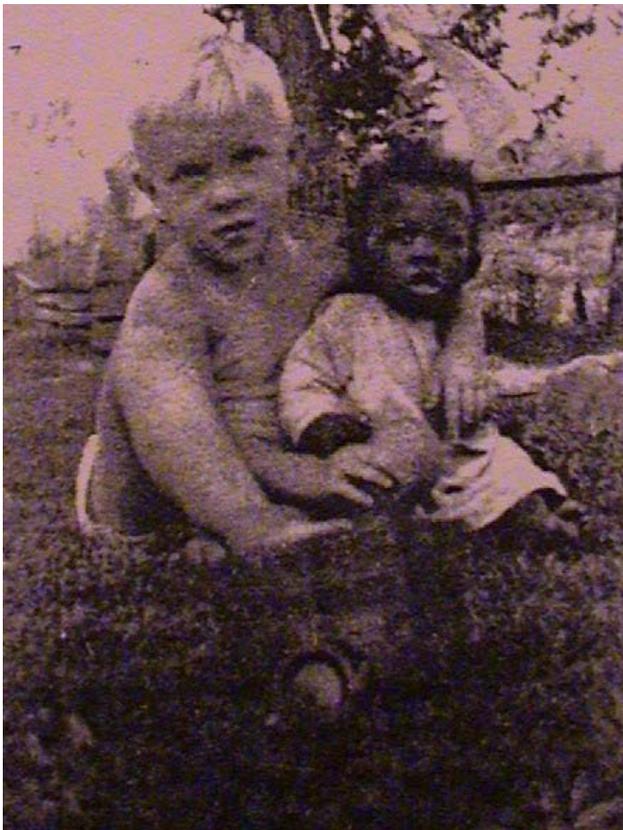
**The House Where Wesley Lived.** Wesley and his wife lived in a house that had four rooms, two and two, and no hallway. It also had a tin roof and was board and batten construction. In regard to the comfort of this home, Wesley said:

I’d wear my britches in the daytime, and I’d stuff them under the door to keep the raccoons out at night. I’d get up of a morning and make a fire in the fireplace.

**Neighbors.** Wesley said:

The school bus driver lived on a house on the farm. He was Benny Winkler. He had a clapboard house. It had four rooms and a tin roof. It was north of Martin Road, on the north side of an old rock road.

Daddy's oldest sister lived in it for a while with her husband and three kids after the bus driver [moved out]. Her name was Minnie Lee Hargett.



**Little John Wesley and his friend play in a wooden tub. Source: *The Redstone Rocket*, July 2, 1980.**

Wesley said there was an old run-down store building that a Black family lived in (Parcel B-630). He couldn't recall the woman's name. She had a house full of children. They were never charged any rent. Wesley's small son John had a children's book that contained a picture of a character called Black Sambo. He thought the little boy he played with looked like Sambo, so that is what he called his little friend.

Looking at the Army Real Estate Map, Wesley indicated that the house where the Black family lived was to the east of the one where the school bus driver had lived. It appeared to be on the north side of the cobbled road. He said, "This was where the headquarters for the Shreve farm was." The main house of the Shreve farm had burned.

Shreve farm. Balch did not live on the property. He oversaw hired hands.

Wesley said the property owned by William Balch was once part of the Mr. Darnell lived on the property and

## Daily Life

**Things Wesley's Mother Made.** Wesley said his mother made quilts. She had an ash hopper and saved the ashes to make lye soap.

**The School.** Wesley said his sister finished school at Madison. She walked about a mile to catch a bus.

**The Church.** Wesley said he couldn't remember a church "being around there."

**Store.** The only store Wesley recalled was owned by Mr. Fanning and his wife (C-114).

They lived in the back of the store. They built a little room outside that and put a grist mill in. All the area south of there, people from Pond Beat, came there. Jones had a gin and a warehouse across the road. And a seed house. Jordan Lane came all the way down then.

**Pond Beat Acquaintance.** Wesley said that the Jacobs family raised horses. Lawrence Jacobs was the farm manager of A&M College. Wesley didn't dwell on this question.

**Gin.** The area that Wesley described as the location of the gin and grist mill is at the intersection of Neal Road and Patton (formerly Jordan Lane). It was described in more detail by Odis Golden who lived on the property nearby that was owned by J.F. Geiger.

[Note: At this point John Wesley suggested his father, Mr. Wesley Thomas, age 92, was becoming tired, and the interview was ended.]

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Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Thomas in the 1930s. Source: *The Redstone Rocket*, July 2, 1980.



In a July 2, 1980 article in *The Redstone Rocket*, entitled "Staying Close to Home," Ed Peters reported talking with Wesley Thomas. At that time, Thomas was renting pasture on the arsenal and was grazing beef cows on some of the same land where he had lived and grown cotton and corn 39 years in the past.

At the time of the interview, Wesley said his son, "young John" had grown up and become an engineer at Marshal Space Flight Center. The article included a photograph of Wesley's parents, Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Thomas, when they were at their home on the property rented from Whitaker (C-99).

## JAMES E. WHITAKER

J. E. Whitaker, the landowner of Parcel C-99, never lived on the parcel. According to Wesley Thomas, Whitaker had a land manager who lived on the property and oversaw the farming of his land; in addition, he rented part of it to the Thomas family. Whitaker is an example of one of the many landowners who owned the pre-arsenal land but did not live on it. Local authors Goldsmith and Fulton present a sketch of this man.

Source: *Medicine Bags and Bumpy Roads* by Jewell S. Goldsmith and Helen D. Fulton. The Valley Publishing Company, Huntsville, AL, 1985, pp. 277-278.

James Ezekiel Whitaker was born September 24, 1889 in New Hope, Alabama. He left there to attend Berea College in Kentucky. Apparently he was not born to wealth, as he worked his way through college by waiting tables. He studied to be a teacher and earned his diploma in 1914. He taught in Oklahoma for six years before returning to Marshall County, Alabama to teach.

In a school play he was cast as “Dr. Cure-All.” Perhaps the part inspired him, because he again became a student. In 1922, he received his Doctor of Medicine Degree from Tulane University; he served his internship at the Charity Hospital in New Orleans. Today the Charity Hospital in New Orleans is known to be crowded and serve many people—apparently this has been true during the many decades of its operation. Goldsmith and Fulton state that after Whitaker finished his internship there, he remarked that it was the only hospital he had ever seen where two patients were often placed in the same bed because of lack of space.



**Dr. James E. Whitaker**

The year Whitaker graduated from Tulane he married Cora Buford who was from his hometown, New Hope, Alabama. They had only one child, who died at birth. Whitaker practiced medicine (general practice and surgery) in New Hope from 1922 to 1926 and then moved to Huntsville.

In 1937, he was president of the Madison County Medical Society. While he was known to be a fine surgeon, he had an intense interest in the treatment of cancer, which led him to do special training at Michael Reese Hospital. Afterward, he returned to Huntsville and opened an office in the Times Building.

Dr. Whitaker had one of the first (in the Huntsville area) X-ray machines and the first deep therapy machines, which was used in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. He became well known and sought out because of his successful treatment of cancer. In addition, Dr. Whitaker continued to be a teacher—he conducted formal classes to instruct nurses. One of the nurses he taught was Miss Ann Schrader. She was a registered nurse who worked as night supervisor at the Huntsville Hospital and did private duty nursing.

In 1949 Dr. Whitaker recognized the need for more hospital space and opened the Whitaker Clinic on Fifth Avenue (now Governor's Drive). In 1954 it was expanded and the name was changed to Fifth Avenue Hospital. Twenty years later it was purchased by Huntsville Hospital.

Two years after the death of Cora Buford Whitaker in 1950, Dr. Whitaker married "Miss Ann" Schrader. She became his chauffeur after she retired from nursing and drove him wherever he needed to go, regardless of the hour.

Miss Ann recalled her husband, saying he was compassionate and never too busy to listen attentively to a patient. She recalled one occasion when "Dr. Zeke" informed the mother of a very sick little boy that he had appendicitis and needed immediate surgery. When the mother forlornly replied that she had no money, Dr. Whitaker asked her if she were thinking of money or her child's life. He performed the surgery and never gave a thought to being paid.

Dr. Whitaker was 80 years old when he retired. He died seven years later in 1977.

## **ODIS H. GOLDEN**

*Interviewed August 4, 2005*

Odis Golden was born in May 27, 1923. In 1938, when the Merrimac mill closed for Christmas (and didn't open for a year), Melia Golden was out of work and out of housing. She moved her children from Mill Village to Hickory Grove. Odis said his uncle, Jim Golden, moved with them. Odis was fifteen years old.

### **The Location of Hickory Grove**

Odis said that before the Army bought the land, Hickory Grove was a little community around where Neal Road dead-ends into Jordan Lane (Patton Road). Patton Road used to be called Jordan Lane. The pronunciation is more like "Jurden." The county road map from 1938 shows "Neal" Road crossed Jordan and ran a short distance before ending. The short piece of the road extending east of Jordan (Patton) ran a short distance on Parcel C-13 and then dipped down on C-14, where it ended. It must have run beside the store that was located there.

### **Their Home and Daily Life**

**Description of the House.** The Goldens rented a house and a garden spot on the J.F. Geiger farm, which had 70 acres (C-108). Odis said, "It wasn't much of a house." Geiger himself did not live on the property. The "run down" house rented for \$8 to \$10 a month. Odis commented:

It stood on rock pillars and was four feet off the ground in the back. It was an old poplar house; it had cracks in it everywhere. The winters were real cold, and the wind whistled Dixie through the house. We like to froze our back ends off.

The house had a hall down the middle. There was one door in the front, one on the side, and one in the back. The roof was tin. The front door opened into a hall. One room was to the right and one was to the left. Uncle Jim had the room on the left. It had a small fireplace in it, which was probably meant for burning coal. The bedroom on the right had a bigger fireplace, which opened only to that room. Two beds were in the room. Odis explained that in those days, people didn't necessarily have a living room.

Behind the bedroom on the right side was the kitchen. The only inside door for the kitchen was through that bedroom. From the outside, the kitchen could be entered from a door in the back or the one on the east side that was accessed from the high porch that ran along that side of the house.

**The Well.** The Goldens got water from a pipe well.



**Melia Golden, mother of Odis Golden.**

**Getting Wood.** Uncle Jim would cut wood for the fireplaces and Odis would help him drag it home. Odis said Mr. Geiger would let them use his mules and horses. He didn't know Mr. Geiger's first name. He said, "I always called him 'Mr.'" Odis said he helped his uncle drag the wood home because his uncle was crippled. "Uncle Jim had the measles when he was small, and that went into his knees, and made him what you'd call,

and I mean no disrespect in saying it, knock-kneed.” “However,” Odis commented wryly, “Uncle Jim liked a shot of whiskey and would walk a hundred miles for it.” Uncle Jim did most of the plowing.

**How They Survived.** Odis said he worked in the fields alongside his mother, hoeing and picking cotton and corn. They got paid 75 cents a day for twelve hours work. They worked in their garden plot. “My mother canned everything,” Odis said. “That’s how we made it. They call them the good old days, but I wouldn’t want any more of them.”

### **Going to Town**

Since the Goldens didn’t have a mule or horse of their own, if Odis wanted to go to town (the mill village), he’d have to walk a couple of miles, and he commented with feeling that he “got mighty tired of walking everywhere.”

### **The Neighbors**

The house the Goldens rented was “down the slope from the mountain.” Odis said it had been close to 70 years ago, and he couldn’t remember the name of the mountain for sure, but he thought it was Madkin. A corn patch and maybe another field was between their house and the mountain. Geiger planted the corn, or rather, the people who worked for him did. They didn’t fertilize it, so it didn’t grow well. There were a lot of rocks in the field on the slope. Odis was trying to pull some out once and nearly broke his ribs.

Odis said:

A lot of colored people lived in little houses—shacks—up around the mountain. Most of them were farm hands. They let their hogs run loose to eat off other people’s places and root up things. Some people got as mad as blazes about that. My little old dog would run them back.

An old colored lady, they called her Aunt Mattie, lived on the mountain. She was a good old lady. She went to Mill Village to wash clothes for people.

I remember Buster. He lived on the mountain. He had blue tick hounds. Somebody killed one of them once. I can’t remember if they shot it or poisoned it. Buster made a big stink about it. I didn’t blame him. I would have, too. Me and a colored boy, Shay, took them [the blue tick hounds] rabbit hunting. They were good rabbit hunters.

The researcher asked who Shay was, and Odis replied,

We were buddies. I was about 15. He lived down the hill from us on Geiger's property. There was two girls and two boys and an old man— Bud, Shay, Dolly and Helen. The old man was Lawrence Childers. He didn't have a wife. He worked on WPA [Work Projects Administration], and the kids worked for the old man [for Geiger]. The boy worked all one spring and the old man gave him an old .22 rifle. But they used the old man's mules to go to the bottoms and cut their wood. They got their house. It was a shack, and I mean, *a shack*.

Other neighbors lived about a mile away. The Brewers were just east of the school on the same side. He had cattle there. They may have belonged to Jones (that parcel is shown as C-12, J.E. Humphrey).

### **The Community and Daily Life**

**The School.** The teacher let the kids from the nearby Hickory Grove School (Parcel C-110) come and get water from the well. Odis said he guessed they were allowed to come there and fill their buckets because it was a pipe well and safe. One of his sisters went to stay at Merrimack with her aunt, but his baby sister, Dorothy, who was only nine or ten years old, went to Hickory Grove School. Odis never went to the school because he was 13 and it didn't go beyond the sixth grade. His brother went away to the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) camp.

Odis, who in later years worked on Redstone Arsenal as a draftsman at Facilities Engineering, said that after the Army bought the land, the school building was used for Army purposes. Until about 1975, it was used as the post transportation office. Then it was torn down. It stood on a knoll a little northwest of where Patriot Road meets Neal Road.

**The Gin.** Odis Golden stated:

There was a cotton gin on the south side of Neal Road just after you got on it [if you turned off Jordan (Patton) on Neal]. I didn't go around it too many times [the mill]. Several of the Colored men who lived up on the mountain worked at the gin. It just ran in the fall. I think a man named Jones owned it. I don't ever remember seeing him.

**The Store.** A store was located where Neal Road ran into Jordan (Patton Road):

It was right there on the east side of Jordan. It was a one-room store. There may have been a room behind that one for storing things, but I never looked back there. We didn't do much business there. We didn't have enough money. Harrod [spelled as pronounced] General ran it. He came out of Huntsville and then he went back to Huntsville to a store there. [Odis started to say something about the man, and then thought better of it.]

**The Church.** Odis said he couldn't think of a church "right around there." He didn't go to church.

**Hunting.** Odis liked to hunt. He said there was plenty of game to be found, and "you could hunt anywhere back then." One good place to hunt was **Beetle Slash**. The name is emphasized because Odis described an area that had been mentioned to the researcher, but none of the others interviewed could give directions to its location. However, Golden was familiar with the buildings since he'd worked on the arsenal. When he worked on RSA, Equipment Management in the 3700 area was right in front of the swampy area where Beetle Slash was.

**Recreation.** Odis emphasized he was "pretty poor." Lots of people were poor then. Sometimes he walked to the mill village to see a movie. The movies were open on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday nights. He liked to go hunting. Sometimes they swam in McDonnell Creek. It was better to swim in than Huntsville Spring Branch, because it was clear and clean. Huntsville Spring Branch was dirty.

## HELEN WEBSTER RECTOR

(Interviewed March 2005 and May 2005)

### The Family

Helen Rector was a young girl when her father rented a house on the Parcel shown as A-33, owned by Lillian McDonnell. Helen said that was in about 1937 or 1938 when the mill closed one day, abruptly, after the third shift.



Helen Rector.

The union was coming into Huntsville. The mill workers, who paid 50 cents a week rent for their houses, had to swear they wouldn't join the union. If they did not sign a pledge that they would not join, they had to move out of mill housing. Her father, Ridley Carr Rector did not like being told what to do and would not sign the pledge, and so it was that they came to rent a tenant house on A-33.

Ridley Rector (born Jan. 29, 1911) came from a family of seven boys and two girls. His father, Calvin Rector (born Nov. 25, 1875), was the Sheriff of Crossville Tennessee until he arrested a bootlegger, and by the time the case came before the judge, his seven sons had drunk all of the evidence. Seeking new employment, Calvin, along with his wife Octavia and his sons and daughters, moved to Huntsville. That was about 1926.



Five of the seven Rector brothers. Back row: Ohmer, Howard, and Ridley. Front Row: Johnny and Alvin Depoe Rector.



**Ruby and Ridley Rector.**

Initially Calvin Rector, his wife, and his seven sons all went to work in the cotton mill. Calvin did not work in the mill very long. He “did handyman work.” He was a beekeeper, a cobbler, and he sharpened lawn mowers. He was a jack-of-all-trades.



**Helen Rector as a little girl.**

Ruby’s mother was Laura Sisk. Laura Sisk (born in 1879) was part Cherokee. Helen said Laura Sisk she always said she moved here in a covered wagon from “Florence County” when she was a girl. Ruby’s father was Sam Nathan Webster.



**Laura Sisk (born 1879)**

Ruby (born in 1908) married Andrew Shelton. She had two children by the time she was 18 years old. Helen said, “When Mamma was pregnant with her second [child], he [Andrew] wouldn’t work.” Helen said, “The Klu Klux Klan dealt with trifling men. They said, ‘You go to work or we’ll come and visit you.’” Shelton left the state, and Ruby went home to her mother.

Helen thinks her parents met at the Merrimac Mills. Ruby and Ridley Rector married in 1928. Helen said her mother gave birth to her at home, on East Street, and they took her to the hospital when she was nine days old, wrapped in a blanket. She weighed 2 pounds and 14 ounces when she was born.

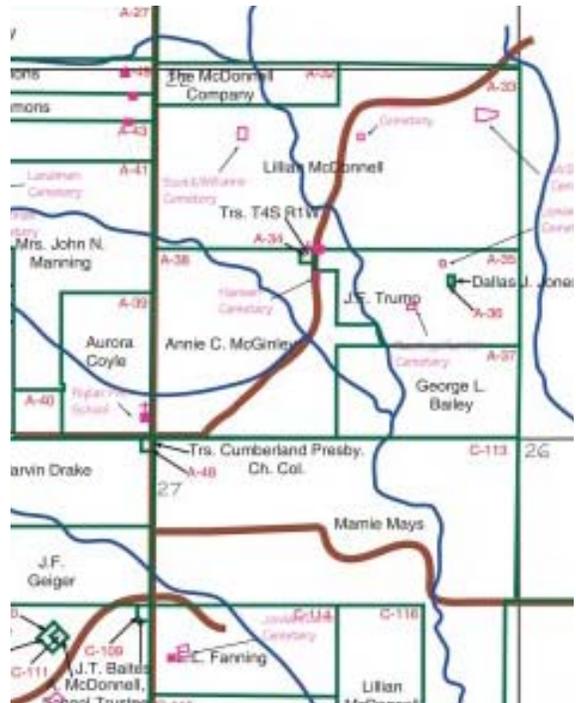


**Laura Sisk, with her grandchildren, Linda Heinz and Roger Dale Porter—the children of Novella Webster Porter (Helen's mother's younger sister) and Jessie Lee Porter.**

### Where Helen Lived: Parcel A-33

The house the Rectors rented was identified as being on Parcel A-33 because the directions Helen described in getting to it from Triana put it in that vicinity. This in itself was not sufficient to place it. However, when discussing life at their rented house, she stated, “To the west of the front door, not very far, less than what would be the width of a yard [meaning the yard around a house], were very old headstones. Some were homemade. They used to put a stone, a natural stone, at the grave and write on it. I remember one grave had what looked like a bench for a marker.”

The researcher matched the directions that Helen had given to the house and the RSA Cemetery Map. Rawlings-Lanier Cemetery was shown in the location that would fit Helen’s directions. The researcher consulted John Rankin’s photographic record of RSA cemeteries. The Rawlings-Lanier cemetery had what Helen would call a “bench for a marker.”



**The Rawlings-Lanier Cemetery. View from southeast corner. Photo by John Rankin.**

While John P. Rankin was photographing the cemetery and scrutinizing the area around it for evidence of additional graves, he had noted a large stone that he speculated might be the base of a chimney and a scatter of bricks. John speculated that this was a

historic house site. He noted the location of the probable house site as being about 30 yards east of the cemetery boundary. Helen remembered that the cemetery was “to the west, not very far, from the front door” of the house where she lived. Everything matched. Having discerned that the house where Helen lived was on Parcel A-33, located on the east side of the cemetery, the researcher then looked up this area on the Alabama State Site File map of recorded archaeological sites. One archaeological site is recorded to the southeast of the cemetery (Site 1Ma903).

## **Living in Mill Village**

Some of people from Pond Beat and Mullins Flat would not have wanted to live in the mill village. They liked their land and their gardens. One woman (White) said her family would have not allowed her to go out with a man from the mill village. However, Helen Rector presented a different view. As stated above, Helen's parents worked in the mill and lived in mill housing until a strike occurred; then they moved to the rental house on Parcel A-33. Helen described living in the mill village and then the rental house. Some of her comments gave insight as to what her mother thought at the time.

**Location of the Village.** When asked what area encompassed the Merrimac Mill village, giving directions by contemporary street names, Helen said,

Mill village started when you cross Drake [going north on Triana Blvd.] and went up [north] as far as the southwest corner of Triana Blvd. and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. [The mill beyond 9<sup>th</sup> street was called the Lowe Mill.] The old store, J.C. Brown's General Store, is closed, but the building is still there. You could get whatever you wanted at the store. No, I mean whatever you *needed*. Back then you got what you had to have, not what you wanted. North of the store was the nicer houses where the mill bosses lived.

There was a shoe repair shop and a drug store behind the store. Talking about the drug store reminds me of when I got hurt and my daddy had to walk to that store to get medicine for me.

[What happened to you?] One day I burned my face and the doctor couldn't get out there because there was an ice storm. My daddy walked to the drug store to get some medicine. The druggist gave him Ungentine.

Back then if women needed help in the house because someone was ill, they would call a Black woman to come in. A Black woman came to my mother and said, "I'd like to pray for your daughter." Of course my mother told her to go ahead.

The Black woman said, "I have some homemade cream, and if you use it, your daughter won't be scarred." I don't know what was in it, but it must have had a lot of wax in it, because in the winter it was cold. There had just been an ice storm, and my mother had to soften it up on the wood stove.

My mother put that cream on me and I never scarred, and I was burned real bad.

[How did you get burned?] I'd been playing with the girl next door at her house all day and didn't have any lunch. I went home, and didn't know my sister had been cooking bacon and eggs. The wood stove was roaring.

We depended on it for heat. I asked Mama where a pan was I could use, and she said on top of the warmer.

I was a small girl for my age, and I reached up for it. My sister had just set it off the stove and it was full of grease. The bacon grease ran down my face and settled in the hollows around my eyes; they swelled shut. Right under my cheekbones, I had terrible blisters, and on my temples, everywhere it could sink in. The grease gathered around my chin, and two or three drops went down on my chest. It hurt. It hurt a lot. But I used that cream the Black woman gave Mama, and there wasn't any scar.

Helen's thoughts went back to J.C. Brown's General Store, and she said:

Later on, the area behind the store became known as Booger Town. Everybody in Huntsville knew where Booger Town was. It was named for seeing ghosts there. Everybody talked about seeing ghosts there.

Booger Town was run-down houses, the very poorest part of Huntsville. It was a put-down to say you were from Booger Town. Along in the late 30's or early 40's, the government and put little green row houses. Each one had two rooms, but a lot of people would live in the two rooms.

Helen commented that one woman had a store in her two-room house. The woman did well with the store and bought other houses. Her daughter worked for her in the store, and she bought houses, and became a wealthy woman.

Both of Helen's parents had worked in the mill. Helen said that all the cotton mill houses at Merrimac were duplexes with electricity and running water. Each duplex had a hydrant out in the yard. Her father dug a trench and brought a waterline to the porch, so they could carry water in the house from the porch instead of going to the hydrant.

They had a coal house. It had a little window. "On one side was a little cubicle your toilet set in. The toilet was self-cleaning and self-flushing. When you sat down on the seat, the water started running very, very fast, and as long as you sat on the seat, the water ran. Someone from the mill came around once a week and filled your toilet paper dispenser. It was a little box, about 8 inches tall, with little sheets, about 2 ½ by 3 inches wide inside it."

Helen said that when they lived in the mill village, her mother raised her own chickens and had her own garden. She bought milk from the neighbors. They had a pasture "beside the mill and beyond to Drake." At night they walked the cows home. Helen said the mill provided pasture and pens "if you wanted." It is probable there was a charge, but Helen didn't know.

The mill had a hospital, a visiting nurse, and a community bathhouse, which was kept spotlessly clean, and stocked with white towels. She said most of the time her parents

used a tub at home for bathing. When the researcher questioned why they would do that, Helen commented maybe it was because the shower stalls had no curtains, or maybe it was because you'd have to stand in line. They liked to bathe at home.

The mill also had a school. It was located on Triana where the soccer field is now. In the block just north of it was a movie theater. It was built into a hill, and the movie theater was in the basement, so it had different levels and steps to enter it. Movies cost a dime. Helen said,

I went to the movies with my sister when I was little. If you weren't over six years old, you could get in free. I was always small for my age, so my sister would pay for herself and I'd go in free. It cost 10 cents to get in the movies, so my sister could use what was left of the quarter to buy popcorn and a candy bar. We lived in the neighborhood so they [person at the movie theater] knew us, and I kept waiting for somebody to say something about my not being six years old, but nobody ever did.

### **Life in the Rector's Rental House on Parcel A-33 (probably 1Ma903)**

**The House.** The Rectors moved into a very small three-room house. It had no electricity. They used oil lamps. Two of the rooms were in the front, opening to a porch that ran the length of the front of the house. The kitchen was a room behind the room on the right side of the front. It had a wood stove. Helen said, "It wasn't fancy." The house didn't have any screens. Helen said:

We didn't have screens, and you had to open the doors and windows to cool off. Before we ate, we had to get a dishtowel and shoo flies outside. When we lived in the mill house, we had screens. Daddy made screens for it and made screens to sell to people.

There was a well in the yard. A big cast iron pot was out in the yard. A fire was lit under it to heat water. The one thing that was the same as when they lived in the mill house was that they washed in a round washtub.

**The Neighbors.** Beyond their house to the west was another house. Helen said it was a lot better than their house. You had to walk through the field to get there. Walking to the west that way, there was an artesian well

**The Artesian Well.** Even though the Rectors had a well by the house, sometimes they walked to the artesian well for water. Helen said, "It was good water." Helen remembers that the water was very cool. When asked to describe the well, Helen said, "What comes to my mind first is the Clampets on The Beverly Hillbillies television show calling the swimming pool the cement pond, because that was what the well looked like, a cement pond." The artesian well had a cement wall around it that was a few feet high. The children were not allowed to play in it. Helen said, "It dropped off steep from the sides

of the wall.” She couldn’t remember how deep it was, but it looked like a swimming pool. It was to the west of the house, between their house and the better house that was across the field to the west.

**Fuel.** Helen said if her parents couldn’t buy wood (they had no car to go get it), they used coal. Sometimes men came around to take orders for wood. Helen said, “You would buy it by the cord, and have it cut stove length. When they delivered it, they would just throw it off, so you had to go out and stack it up.”

There were several coal companies. Helen said:

You’d see them going around with a load. They’d take orders. They would check with the neighbors when they delivered and see they wanted some. People would tell their children who were out playing, “Watch for the coal man!”

**Ice.** Helen said:

We didn’t have an icebox. Once in a while Mama would get some ice for a treat and have iced tea. Sometimes we kids would follow the ice truck and the man would give us a scrap to suck. All us kids would follow the truck. He’d give us a piece to get rid of us.

**Transportation and Road Names.** Public transportation was not available when the Rector family lived in the rental house on pre-arsenal land. She said:

Momma didn’t have a car. In the mill village there was a bus. If you had a dime you could ride it. The trolley was gone by the time I was growing up. Triana was called The Pike. Drake was called New Cut Road. They came through with a grader and cut it and put gravel on it when I was 5 or 6 years old [today Drake changes name to Goss Road as it enters RSA].

Airport Road was called Chelsie Lane. A Black community was there. One old White man lived there. He was a bootlegger. Triana down where we lived was one lane. You’d see more wagons pulled by mules down there than cars in 1938.

## **Foods and Drinks Mamma Made**

**Home Brew.** Ruby Rector made homebrew in her churn. Helen remembered that her mother had “a churn full of water” to which she added 5 pounds of sugar, one or two cakes of yeast, and “I’m not sure now, maybe one can of malt.” She said the size of the malt can was “like syrup came in, like a syrup bucket.” It was purchased at J.C. Brown’s at the corner of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Triana, one of the oldest stores. Helen noted that home brew was stronger than beer. It was a fermented drink.

Thinking about her mother making home brew brought Mrs. Jordan to Helen's mind. She said it was because of the Army that Mrs. Jordan became a bootlegger. Helen used to walk with her mother from their house, south of what is now Hansen Road, to visit Mrs. Jordan. The Jordans farmed. They were truck farmers. This meant they loaded what they grew on a truck and took it off to sell. At the time the Army took ownership of the land, Parcel A-47 was owned by Viola Jordan. A very narrow strip of land bordering Mrs. Jordan's land (A-46) on the west and north belonged to Elizabeth Ledbetter. Ledbetter's land was bordered in the same manner by a narrow strip (A-45) belonging to Julius Jordan.

Helen described Mrs. Jordan as a "country looking woman," about her mother's age. Her husband died about the time the Army took the land. Mrs. Jordan moved to what is called West Lawn now, just off 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Governor's Drive. Nothing was there then except several acres with a house and a barn in the middle of them. Helen said Mrs. Jordan pastured her cows, but she couldn't make a living off the land, so she bootlegged. She had moonshine whiskey, bonded whiskey, beer, and home brew. Helen said her daddy bought whiskey from Mrs. Jordan.

[Note: When the researcher said the name, Helen corrected her. The researcher was pronouncing Jordan so that the "Jor" in the first syllable rhymed with "for." Helen told her the name must be pronounced "Jur," rhyming with "fur." When the researcher later met a person named Jordan, she pronounced it "Jurden" and was corrected. This time she was told to pronounce it as if it rhymed with "for."]

**Sauerkraut.** Helen remembers her mother making sauerkraut. She described what she saw her mother do:

Mamma hand-chopped the cabbage with a tin can. She never had a chopper when she was young. The cabbage was packed in a crock, a churn, which was also referred to as a crock. She put the chopped cabbage down in layers with salt in between them.

I made it once in later years. It came out too salty. Maybe she put water in it, because I didn't, and mine was too dry. I think it had to set about two weeks. Mamma put a lid on it, a cloth, and tied it to keep the flies out. It smelled like something rotten. Flies really came to it. It took all day. She put the dishpan on the wood stove and brought the water in it to a boil, hot enough to seal rubber seals. Cabbage was ready in the summer so that was when she canned it. It was really hot, over that stove, but that was when you had to do it.

**Apples.** Helen helped her mother dry apples. They spread them out on a cloth. She said if you had an outbuilding, you put the cloth on the roof and covered the apples with a sheet. Her mother put the apples in a jar or strung them up. Helen noted that they canned beans, too.

**Sausage.** Both Helen's mother Ruby and Ruby's mother would can sausage at hog killing time. Helen described the process as she remembered it:

First you made the sausage [ground up the meat] and put it in a cotton sack. They were about two-pound, long shaped packages. You cut up flour sacks to make the sacks [to put the sausage in]. You smoked the sausage if you had a smoke house. If you didn't, you cut up the sausage in slices and fried it. I am sure she fried it before she put it in the jars, because I remember seeing cooked out lard in the jar. I don't remember how she sealed it, put it in the canner, I expect. When you were ready to eat it, you took it out and fried it.

### **Other Aspects of Daily Life**

**Tobacco.** Helen's mother Ruby and most of her sisters, as well as Ruby's mother, dipped snuff. Helen said many mill workers used snuff because they couldn't smoke in the mill. Snuff came in tins at first; later it came in glass jars. The jars were a bonus. Helen's mother bought Brouton snuff, "Both ladies and men used it." Helen said her Grandma Rector (her father's mother) thought snuff was a nasty habit.

Helen said that her grandfather raised tobacco. He hung it in the barn and dried it, and then he crumbled it, and put it in a pipe. He grew it only for his own use. Helen's daddy rolled Bull Durham; he always had a sack in his pocket. "About the time the war [WW II] started, ready-roll came out." Helen said her parents became tobacco farmers in the 1950's and 1960's. It was lucrative. You made big money on an acre and a half back then.

**Grandma Webster Grew Corn and Raised Chickens.** Helen said her Grandma Webster grew corn, and it was kept for the mules. There wasn't enough to feed it to the chickens. She'd have to trade her eggs to the peddler. She had to trade for salt. She bought coarse salt by the pound. [She probably couldn't afford refined salt.] She had to buy flour, but she'd take corn to the mill and get corn meal. Helen said, "When the corn came back from the mill you could eat it, but you had to sift it to get the pieces of husks and trash out. You could throw that out for the chickens." Helen's grandparents lived out in the area where Hampton Cove is. She said there was a store and a gin across the mountain where Hampton Cove is now, "right out there is an intersection, curve in the road, and then a bend to the left. The road goes to Guntersville."

### **They Moved Back to Mill Village**

The Rectors had been required to move out of mill village because they would not sign the pledge saying they would not join a union. Helen's father was on one side of the union issue and his mother on the other. Helen was not sure which of her parents was for the union and which was not, but one thing was certain, her father would not be told what to do.

Helen's mother missed her home in the mill village. She wanted electricity, a toilet that flushed, to be on the bus route instead of a dirt road, and all the other amenities that she had known in mill village. Eventually, after the mill had opened up again, they signed the pledge and moved back to mill village.

## **THE MEMORIES OF RUBY RECTOR**

The memories of Ruby Rector, Helen's mother, were preserved in a small booklet entitled *Reflections in a Squirrel's Eye*. Helen once had her mother's copy of this, and she had given it, along with old family photographs, to her daughter. Helen "borrowed back" the copy from her daughter, and entrusted it to the researcher on loan, after having taped her name and telephone number to the cover, saying, "you never know, you [the researcher] might get in an auto accident or something and no one would know who to return it to."

Helen said her mother was interviewed in 1978 by a student for a school project. The name of the school is not shown in the booklet. [Note: When John P. Rankin read this manuscript in 2007, he recognized the booklet being discussed here as one that was reportedly done as a student project at the J.O. Johnson High School.] The project was certainly a worthy one, and the teacher, the sponsors, and the student interviewers, should be applauded for preserving history. The article, "Looking Back," allows Ruby Rector to "speak to us" 27 years after she spoke with the student Marie Godwin. It is presented in its entirety below.

In the days before running water and electricity reached the outskirts of Madison County, life was slower and simpler, and perhaps in its own way happier. Madison County was the cotton capital of the United States and was not yet the Space Capital of the world. Farming functioned more as a food source than an income. Both luxuries and essentials were made by hand, slowly and with much care. The result of the work remains, but a few people remember their making and the circumstances involved. Mrs. Ruby Rector, daughter of a Madison County farmer remembers and was kind enough to share her memories.

"I think we had a lot of fun. We was just a bunch of wild country young'uns. We did just about anything we'd get a chance to."

"We'd get out and build playhouses. We'd always get as far away from the house as we could so we couldn't hear Momma holler for us to come do something. We'd gather moss and make carpets on the floor, and get broke dishes and wash 'em and clean 'em up and have things to sit 'em on. We'd get up in the mountain and climb trees and prowl around. We used to have a lot of fun playing like that."

"Kids don't get out and play now like we used to. We'd get outside and play ball and play everything like that. We used to play two-

eyed catch. Be one on each end with a bat, and one catcher on each end, and you'd hit the ball and you'd run from one end to the other."

"We'd go down (to the creek) and catch crawdads all day. We'd make a hook out of a pin, tie it on a string, and catch them crawdads going and a'coming. You put a worm on a straight pin (or) anything, (and) an old crawdad'll get on it."

Life was not all fun and games. Mrs. Rector's father farmed for a living and had nine children to feed from his harvests. Farming was not done by machine, and everyone had his share of work to do.

"We picked cotton, but I never did mind working in the fields. I liked it. I like to farm. My Daddy had some mules to work (with). He didn't even have a tractor. Back then not many people did.

Farming, as well as other activities, was done according to the signs, mainly the moon. Potatoes and corn were planted on the dark of the moon. Corn planted on a new moon would grow very tall and would not bear. Beans were planted on Good Friday. Farming was not all that was done by the signs. The making of kraut was also done by the phases of the moon.

"In the summer (Momma would) make kraut when the signs (of the moon) was in the heart. They say if you make it when it's in the feet it stinks. That's when I always make kraut, in the summer with the signs."

Living in the country meant that there was not always a doctor around when someone was sick. Only the most serious illnesses required the services of a doctor. Money was scarce and medicine was bought only when absolutely necessary. Many medicines were homemade.

"When we'd get the bad colds, Momma would get some lard and coal oil and turpentine and camphor and quinine and all that stuff and mix it together and put it on a wool cloth and put it on us. (It) smelled like a—I don't know what. Momma used to give us coal oil on sugar for coughing. Put a drop of coal oil on sugar, eat it, and that'd stop you from coughing. They used to say if you'd get some asphida (and) tie a little ball of that stuff up in a rag and wear it around your neck, you wouldn't catch diseases. I have worn it."

Since the history of mankind has been recorded, people have made up stories, gods, and spirits to explain an unidentifiable noise or shadow. The woods at night are full of unidentifiable noises and shadows, and ghost stories are often told to explain them. A ghost story, even if not believed, will stick in a child's memory.

“I remember an old cemetery; they called it the ‘Muddy Lane.’ Somebody went down that road on a horse, and this woman got up in front of him on that horse and rode all the way down that lane. When they got down to the end of it (the lane), she just disappeared.”

“I heard Uncle John tell this. (He) said it was around there close to that cemetery. He started across the creek on a foot log. He stepped up on the foot log on one side, and this woman stepped up on the foot log on the other side. He stepped back so she could come on across, and she stepped back. So he just decided, ‘Well, I’ll just go on across.’ When he got out in the middle, there she was right in the middle, and he just went off in the creek. (He) said he didn’t know where she went.”

“When I was a little bitty kid, when we had to go outside (to use the bathroom), we’d just go outside and squat down in the door. My brother went out with me. He seen a big dog, he said, (as) high as a calf, and he shoved that door to. He couldn’t get me to come back in right then, and I was out in the yard screaming and hollering, and he was inside holding the door. I never did know what that was, but somebody else had claimed that they had seen a big dog like that down the road. We never did know what that was. I never did really see no ghosts or none of that stuff like that, ‘cause I never did believe it.”

Nighttime was not only a time for ghosts, but also a time for music. With no electricity for television or radio, recreation was homegrown. Her father’s banjo was a regular nighttime fixture in Mrs. Rector’s childhood.

“(Daddy) used to pick a banjo at night or play a fiddle. He could do either one. That’s about the only kind of music we had. We didn’t sing much. Daddy’d just get that old banjo up and pick it. A lot of nights in the wintertime when it was cold, we’d pop popcorn. He’d pick the banjo while we was popping popcorn. We’d get a big ole dishpan full.”

Today, fields are plowed, sown, and harvested by machine. Bluegrass is now the poplar fad, and no longer merely an Appalachian custom. Times have changed, and people have changed with them. Only the memories remain. Like the present, the past was made of good times and bad times, and no one can say whether life has changed for the better or for worse. But time has a way of making bad times seem better, and life is always nicer when one is looking back.

Marie Godwin

Some of the people who were interviewed said their doctor was Dr. Beard. Others mentioned Dr. Duncan. A biography of Dr. Beard and of Dr. Duncan is in the book, *Medicine Bags and Bumpy Roads* (pp. 219-220 and pp. 255-256, respectively) written by **Jewell S. Goldsmith and Helen D. Fulton** (1985). The following information was taken from their book. The photographs were copied from their book.



#### **DR. ROBERT SAMUEL BEARD, SR.**

Robert Samuel Beard was born in 1874 in Apalachicola, Florida, the son of a cotton sampler. He received his medical degree from Knoxville College (Tennessee) in 1922. His wife was from Knoxville, and for the next 10 years they lived in that city. He practiced medicine, was on staff of Knoxville College, operated a drug store, and taught high school for three years. Then they moved to Huntsville. He practiced medicine in various locations before purchasing a two-story house on Church Street for a clinic. He was a member and officer in the Charitable Society, which promoted self-improvement in the Black community and was a Medical Examiner at Alabama A&M University and Oakwood College.

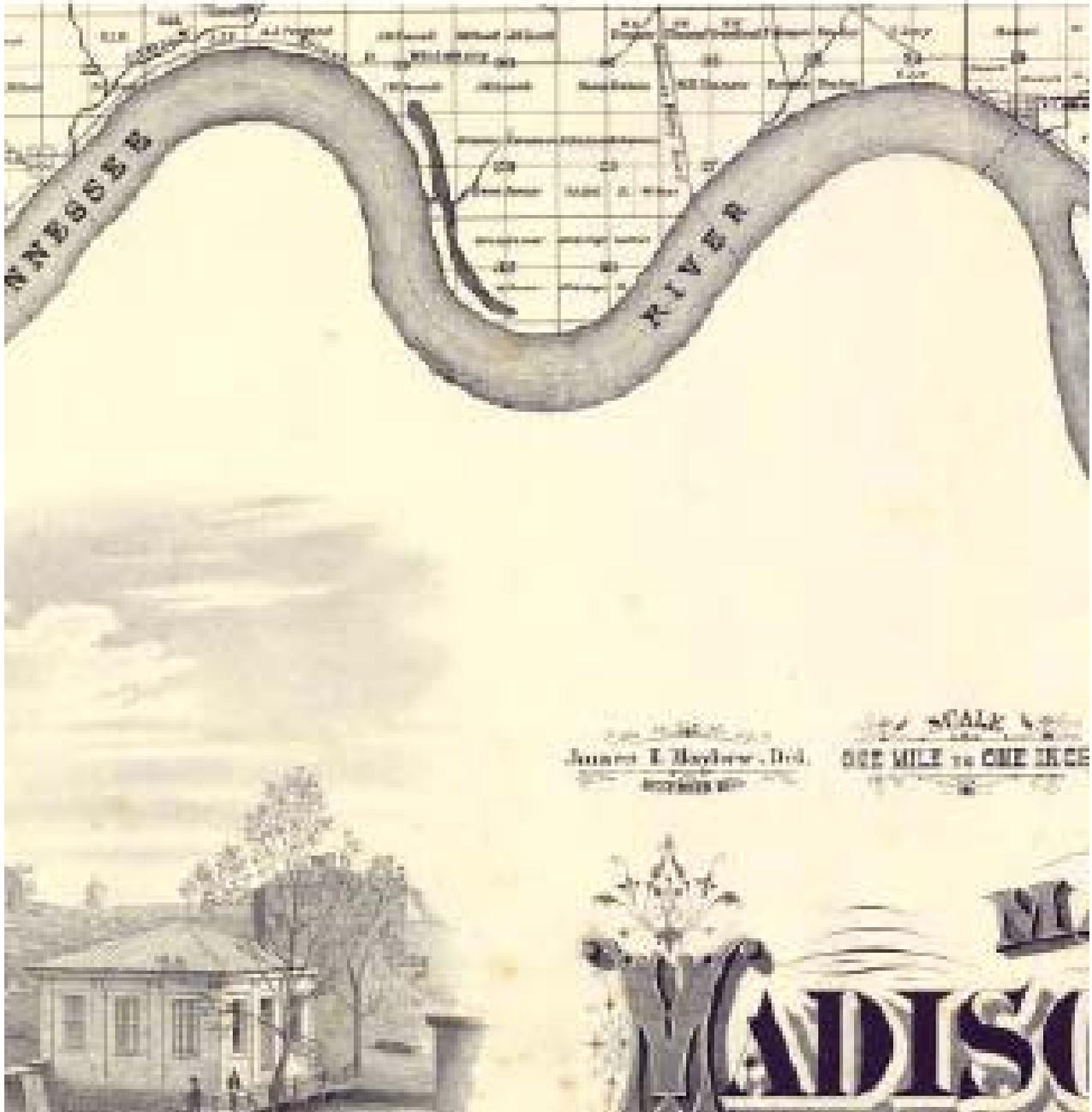
#### **DR. MAURICE MILLER DUNCAN**

Maurice Miller Duncan was born, the son of a planter, in Montgomery County, Alabama in 1884; however, his father moved to Florida upon his retirement and Maurice graduated from high school in Tampa. He graduated with honors from the University of Alabama Medical School in 1914. Thereafter, he practiced in Choctaw County for a year, in Paint Rock in Jackson County for three years and then moved to Huntsville, where he had an office in the Huntsville Infirmary, the forerunner of Huntsville Hospital.



Dr. Duncan was an active member of various civil organizations. He singlehandedly raised \$25,000 toward the construction of a TB hospital near Decatur. Dr. Duncan specialized in internal medicine, delivered many babies, and loved his patients. When his female patients had no one to care for them, he would send his wife to give them nursing care and even cook for them. He was friendly, joked with his patients, and put them at ease. Dr. Duncan was an avid fisherman and coon hunter. In 1949, he gave up his private practice to take the position of chief civilian physician at Redstone Arsenal. During this time he was a member of the Ordnance Industry Physicians Association and a member of the Huntsville Hospital Medical Staff. He held the position of chief civilian physician at Redstone Arsenal until he retired in 1958.

## FERRY CROSSINGS



Three ferry crossings (lightly drawn lines across the river) can be seen on the map drawn by James Mayhew in 1875. One (far left) was in Triana. Ten miles separated Huntsville from the Tennessee River; Thomas Fearn and LeRoy Pope headed the Indian Creek Navigation Company that built a canal from Hunt's Spring Branch via Indian Creek to the Tennessee River. The canal was said to be ready to ship cotton in 1827. It was completed in April 1831. It lost feasibility in 1845—the Whitesburg Turnpike was completed and drew the business from Triana. The Whitesburg Pike (now Memorial Parkway) led to the Ditto landing ferry (far right on the map). The ferry crossing shown on the map to the right of center was Lehman's (Leeman's) Ferry.

## MOONSHINE

The researcher talked with Tom Kenny, editor of the *Old Huntsville* magazine in September of 2005. Kenny explained that back in the 1920's, hundreds of gallons of moonshine were made every week. Men in Huntsville (White) would set people up to make moonshine for them. They would have the stills made by a local blacksmith, and they would bring the sugar from Atlanta. Kenny said one way people were caught was that they were observed buying a large quantity of sugar. He said, "Blacks were favored for making whiskey because they wouldn't tell on each other." He added that all the whiskey men paid off the law. If one of the kingpin's whiskey makers got too obvious or messed up, the kingpin called the law, and the whiskey maker got busted. Kenny also stated that every gallon of whiskey was sold in a narrow, glass Coca Cola jug. The jugs were purchased at the local Coca Cola bottling works. He said they were sold "off the books."



**The Coca Cola Bottling Works in Huntsville. Source: Business Men's League of Huntsville, Alabama 1908.**

While everyone seemed to buy jugs and barrels at the Coca Cola Bottling Works in Huntsville, whether it be for storing molasses or for whiskey, it seems not everyone had a "sponsored" still. As Arthur Jordan said during his interview, "People were making moonshine. Every time the police went out, they would tear up the still they found. They would go in shooting." He said most of the stills were "in the thick woods." Other people who were interviewed also mentioned the presence of stills in the pre-arsenal communities. In two cases, locations were mentioned, one on Kirby property in Pond Beat and another at Horton's Ford.

Some people made their own stills. Lester Love was one of those people. His story was



found in a booklet entitled *Reflections in a Squirrels Eye*. It is a collection of 19 short interviews. Helen Rector, who allowed the researcher to use her copy, said her mother had been interviewed by a student. No school name or project name is given in the booklet, dated “Winter of 1978.” [Note: When John P. Rankin read this manuscript in 2007, he recognized the booklet being discussed here as one that was reportedly done as a student project at the J.O. Johnson High School.] Lester Love’s photograph is on the cover. The cover photographer is listed as Debbi Bishop; thus, it is reasonable to assume that she took the photos of Lester Love that are included in the article. The author of the article was Mike Porter, a young man who captured a piece of history before it was lost.

Lester Love made his own still. It is probable that his home-made still is an example of the kind that was used by the “independent” moonshine makers who made their moonshine, hidden away from outsiders, in the woods on what is now Redstone Arsenal. The name Love was a prominent one in the pre-arsenal communities of Silverhill and Pond Beat. It is not known whether Lester Love was kin to any of the Love families named in this report. However, one connection to the pre-arsenal communities was ascertained. Lester Love was married to (and later divorced by) a woman who lived in one of them.

“**Mr. Love on Moonshine,**” written by **Mike Porter**, as found in *Reflections in a Squirrel’s Eye*,” 1978, pp. 16-25. Reproduced in its entirety.

“I learned to make whiskey under one of the finest whiskey makers you ever saw. That’s why I had such a good business, ‘cause I made it right. People came to my outfit and saw me make it and they could depend on me havin’ the right kind of stuff (ingredients) and (whiskey) fit to drink.”

Moonshining is an old art of which very few craftsmen are left. Lester Love is an expert in the field of moonshining. How is moonshine made? This is one of the many interesting things discussed in this story which Mr. Love was generous enough to tell us.

Moonshine can be defined as unlawful, untaxed liquor, but it can also be described as a clear liquor made from cornmeal, sugar and water that has fermented. The fermented mixture is then run through a still. Sixty gallons of water, fifty pounds of sugar, and a half bushel of cornmeal produced four to five gallons of liquor.

Lester started out working with a true quality moonshine maker so he learned how to make it right. Lester got five gallons of whiskey a week for helping the moonshiner cut wood and keep the condenser cool. After working a month, Lester decided that he knew enough to go work for himself. The first time he tried to make whiskey, he got two gallons (five normal) of whiskey. Lester kept on trying and his operation became bigger and better.

After a while the law caught him. Mr. Love was caught twice by the county trying to sell whiskey and once by the federal government starting to mash. That was the last time Mr. Love made moonshine.

To make moonshine, you have to have the equipment.

#### EQUIPMENT NEEDED

1. You will need a 60 gallon lard drum, but it would be better to have one made out of copper. This will be your boiler and vat. You can use old whiskey barrels as vats and use the lard drum as the boiler all the time so you can run your still full time.
2. Three whiskey barrels are required for a capbear, thump keg and condenser barrel.
3. Also needed are three pieces of copper pipe; two about 2" and the other about 1/2" in diameter.
4. To end the equipment list, you need some steel pipes and two sheets of tin.

#### HOW TO SET UP YOUR STILL

1. First dig a pit about 2 feet wide, 1 foot deep, and 5 feet longer than your tin.
2. Place the steel pipes over the pit, under the tin.
3. Cover the tin with dirt and place the large drum at one end in the ground over the pit.
4. Put dirt around the drum but leave an air vent behind the lard drum and tin for the heat and smoke to draw through.
5. Cover with the cap bear, which is a whiskey barrel with the bottom knocked out.

6. At the top of the cap bear, cut a hole big enough to fit one of the copper pipes.
7. Insert one end of the pipe in the hole. This pipe is called a crane neck.
8. Place another barrel on top of the ground about four feet from the boiler. This is your thump keg.
9. Cut two holes opposite from each other at the top.
10. Insert the other end of the crane neck from the cap bear into one of the holes.
11. Four feet from your thump keg, place another barrel with the top end out.
12. Drill one hole at the top in the side.
13. Take the other big pipe and place it in the other hole from the thump keg to the hole in the new barrel which is the condenser barrel. Inside the barrel, place a container such as a tomato can only much bigger. (See diagram)
14. Connect at the top the copper tube from the thump keg.
15. At the bottom of the container, connect the small tubing and run it outside the dung hole of the whiskey barrel. This is the spout.
16. Fill the outside of the container, inside the barrel, with water. The cooler the water is, the better. This is to condense the whiskey.
17. Seal all leak spots with a paste of flour and meal.

#### HOW TO MAKE WHISKEY

When you have gotten your equipment, you are ready to start making your whiskey.

1. The first thing to do is mix one-half bushel of cornmeal with fifty pounds of sugar.
2. Put this mixture in your boiler or vat along with sixty gallons of water. This is your mash or malt. Leave an inch or two at the top to prevent spillage when the mash starts to ferment. In the summer, after a day or two, the mash will start to turn and ferment. Later it will stop and that's when it's "ready to run." The top will be clear of particles of meal and sugar. If the malt is in the vat, drain off the water into the boiler.
3. If you are using the boiler as a vat, simply leave the malt in it, and
4. assemble your equipment.
5. After assembling the equipment, build a fire under the tin at the end of the fire pit (see diagram). The fire doesn't have to be big to give off the heat needed. The water will steam and go through the thump keg. The thump keg takes some pressure from the boiler and keeps the cap

bear from blowing up. The thump keg also makes a thumping sound and tells when the fire is too hot and pressure too high. The faster the thump, the higher the pressure. The steam travels through another pipe to the condenser.

6. Don't seal around the pipe with paste where the whiskey runs out. Instead, seal with cotton so the water will drain, but not too fast.
7. Keep the water in the condenser cool. The cooler the condenser is kept, the more whiskey that will be gotten. Keep adding cool water or ice.
8. The first liquid that comes out is pure alcohol and will continue to flow for about three gallons. After the pure alcohol, whiskey will run for about a gallon. Then backings or weak whiskey will run until the boiler is dry of liquid.
9. Get about two gallons of the backings and
10. put out the fire.
11. Mix the whiskey with the pure alcohol and stir.
12. Fill a one-pint bottle with the mixture.
13. Hit it three hard times on the palm of the hand. If a big bubble comes up and flies off then the proof is too high.
14. If it is too high, mix in some backings.
15. Test it again. If a ring of bubbles or beads form around the side, you have a good 85 to 90 proof whiskey.

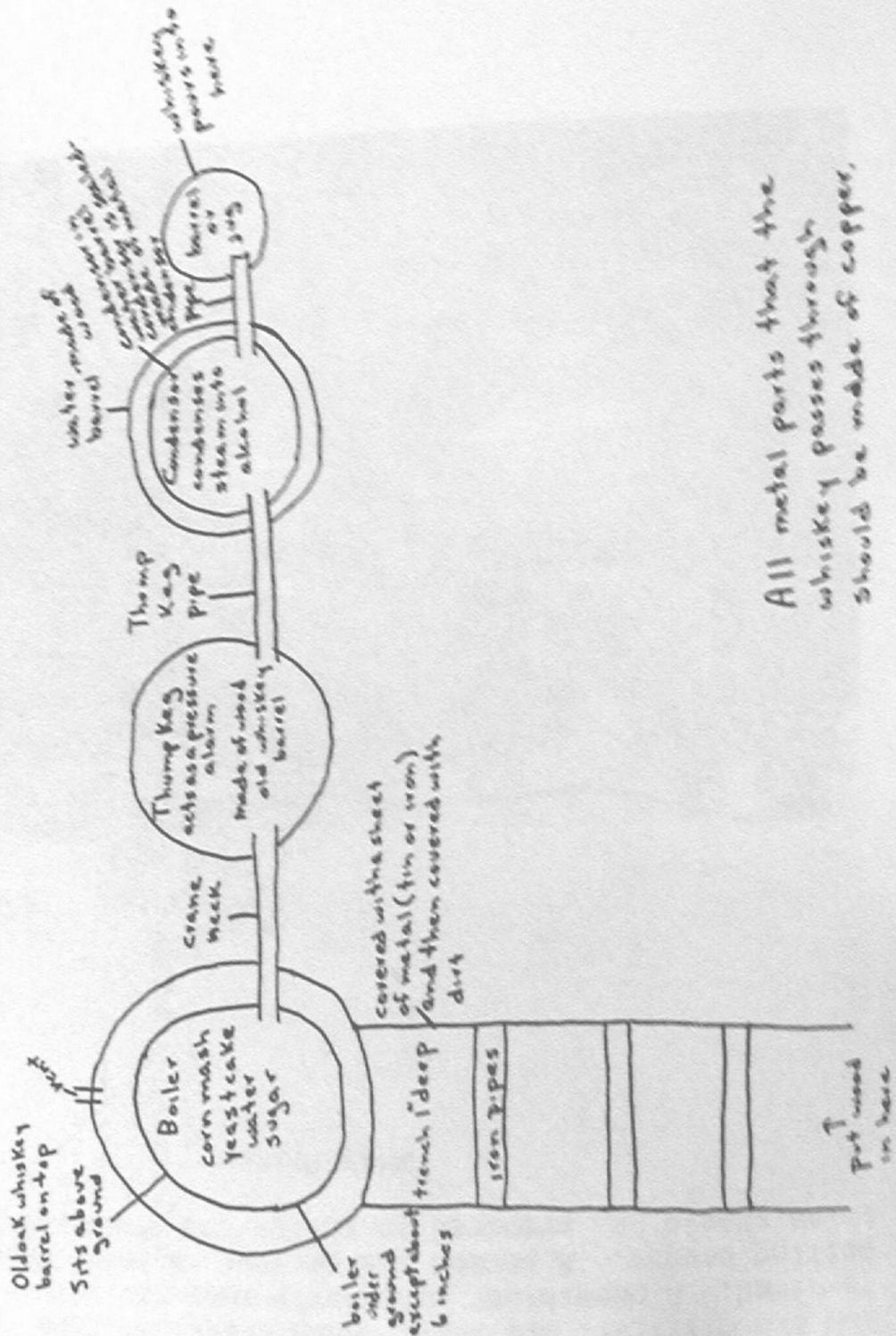
“What gets a man caught you know, is these jealous people you sell to get jealous of you, think you makin' too much money. They go and tell first one and then another and so it gets out all over the country.”

The making and selling of moonshine is a dangerous and difficult business. Much skill and time is involved. A moonshiner constantly runs the risk of getting caught. A person who decides to make moonshine should be prepared to suffer the consequences.

Mike Porter

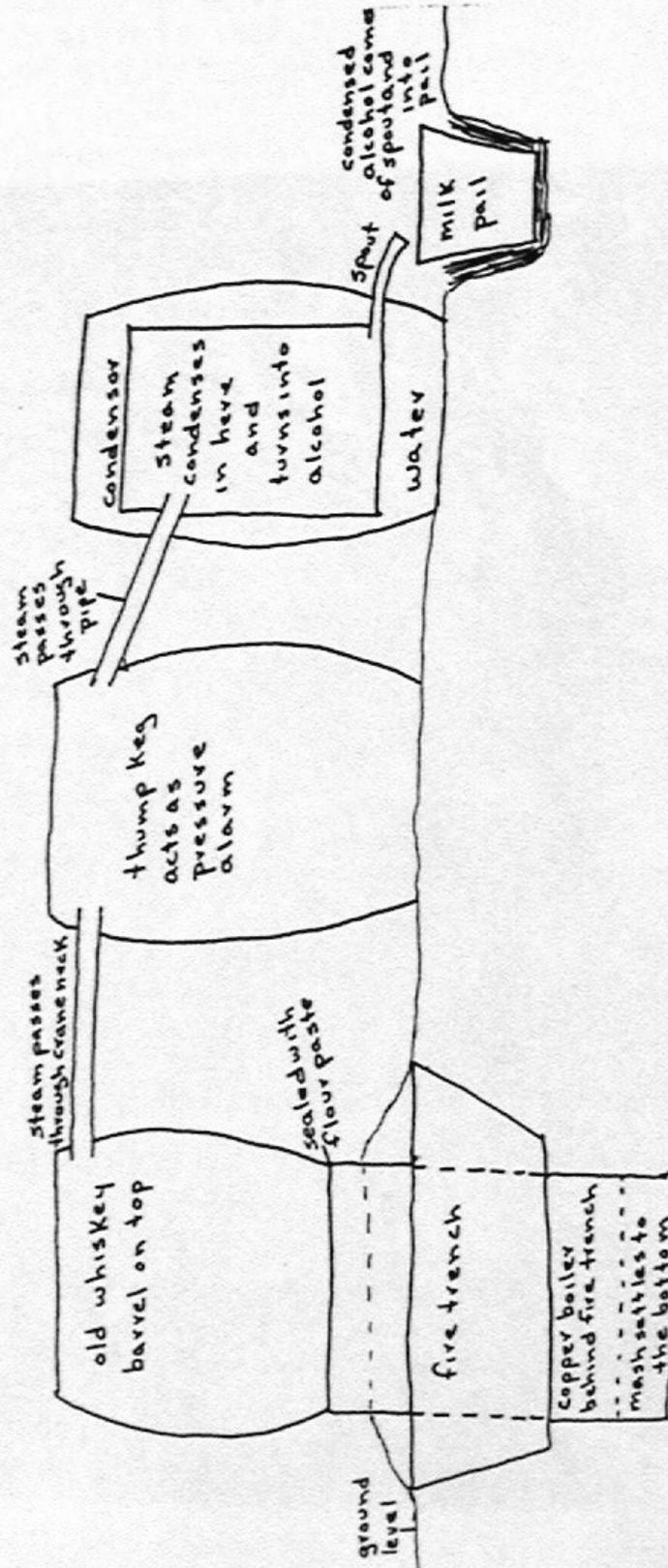
**[The diagrams of the still on the following pages were drawn by Lester Love.]**

# Top View of a Moonshine Still



All metal parts that the whiskey passes through should be made of copper.

# Side View of a Moonshine Still



All places where steam may leak out should be sealed with flour paste.

## COW MANURE TEA

While folk medicine has become popular in recent years, many elder people don't follow the popular trends. Some elderly people who are now more affluent and live in nice homes "don't remember" any folk medicines that were used. My mother-in-law explained to me many years ago that people didn't talk about their home remedies for fear they would be thought of as "backward." This may be why many people who were interviewed didn't know of any. When the researcher asked one elderly man who was interviewed if his mother had ever given him any home remedies when he was ill, he said, with what seemed to be a bit of mischief in his eyes, "My mother gave me cowshit tea!" This was one the researcher had not heard of before, so that can fall into the category of "Questions she didn't know to ask."

How prevalent was tea made from cow manure? The researcher asked a Black female professor who is head of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Alabama if she had ever heard of such a tea. The woman grew up in Selma. She said that the older people in that area had used it. Another Black female professor who teaches in Mississippi but grew up in the Tuscaloosa area was asked, and she was very familiar with its use in the days of her elders. A blue-collar worker (Black female) was asked the same question. She is a native of the Montgomery area, and she also gave an immediate positive response to knowing of its use and described her mother putting the cow manure in a white bag and boiling it. Since cow manure tea was immediately acknowledged by Black women who had been raised in three different rural areas of Alabama, it was concluded that it was probably used by a number of people in the pre-arsenal communities.

However, further information about cow manure tea was sought, and it was found in an article printed in the June 30, 2002 edition of *The Huntsville Times*, page A-17, entitled "In rural areas, old-timers swear cow manure tea cures colds, fever," written by Tom Gordon and reprinted from *The Birmingham News*.

Gordon interviewed 78-year-old Mary Surles. She said the beverage is commonly called "Many Weed Tea," and its main ingredient is dried cow manure. The other ingredients in it improve the taste. Surles is from Lowndes County, and she said that there and elsewhere in Alabama people her age and younger claim the tea "puts their colds and fever to flight." The tea is called Many Weed Tea because the chips contain grasses and weeds, which cows commonly graze.

Gordon said Mosses Mayor Walter Hill whose grandmother made it for him called the tea a "miracle cold drug." Gordon also quoted veteran state Senator Hank Sanders of Selma who said his mother served it to him when he was a boy, and "It often tasted different, depending on what the cow had been eating."

Gordon said a Perry County resident, Beatrice Harris, said she drinks some when she has a bad cold.

Tom Gordon presented a description of Mary Surles making the tea:

When Mary Surles prepared a recent batch, she spread a white cloth on a plastic table covering. On that cloth she placed and moistened two large, dried manure chunks, two lemons with their tops and bottoms removed, several dried stalks of a common silver-green plant known as rabbit-tobacco, and a cup of honey.

After knotting the cloth to form a sack, she lowered it into the boiling water of the saucepan and the clear water immediately turned brown.

As the boiling continued for several minutes, she added nine Halls honey lemon cough drops, Vicks drops, she said, would have been a little better. And a little corn liquor would have been a plus as well. The taste is a mix of honey, herbs, and lemon.

“It tastes like medicine is supposed to taste,” Surles said.

Gordon asks the question: “Is it safe?” and Surles, who he describes as an active woman who seems younger than her years, replies that she has made and drunk the tea too many times to count and so have her children. She comments that she has never known anyone “to get sick off that tea,” and that when you cook it, you sterilize all kinds of germs.

**NOTE:** The other women I talked with did not mention cough drops as an ingredient. However, “a little white lightning” was mentioned. The recipes varied.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this ethnographic research was to learn about the people who lived on the land that is now Redstone Arsenal. The subjects who were interviewed were from the farmsteads in the area around the Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Chaney plantation and the farmsteads south of Elko, Hickory Grove, Mullins Flat, and Pond Beat. The fact that the focus of the interviewing changed after the first several interviews were conducted and the different time periods in which interviewing was conducted have been explained in detail in the Introduction.

The goal of the research was to provide data that would serve a basis for further research. That goal has been met. While new information is generally not presented in the conclusion, it is done so here. Two incidents, both involving shootings [one fatal and one not] have been described in this section. They were not included in the interviews of those who told about them, as the association did not need to be made with family members still living today. However, the incidents were relevant to some of the observations being made below.

A number of observations that can be drawn from the data are presented. Extensive details and supporting evidence are not given here, as that can be found by reading the interviews. The following observations may provide insight for future researchers.

- This study identified three communities by name: Pond Beat, Mullins Flat, and Hickory Grove. The people from Mullins Flat (including Silverhill) and Pond Beat have a strong sense of community. Two men interviewed identified the area where they lived as Hickory Grove.
- In order to establish a frame of reference, two areas were identified: the area in the vicinity of Union Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the area south of the town of Elko. The church was beside a lodge and a store, and the church served as a place for social events; while the church and lodge were focal places for activities, Black former residents did not identify the area with a community name. A White woman who lived in the area said there was no community name—it was just a rural area where people lived.
- A railroad depot was in Elko, thus, a switch of that railroad that was located nearby on the Chaney plantation was called Elko switch. People who lived in the northwest corner of the arsenal identified their location and gave directions by plantation owner name. However, in order to establish a reference for the area, it has been referred to in this report as the farmsteads in the vicinity of Elko or the Elko farmstead community.
- The people, both Black and White, from Mullins Flat and Pond Beat had a very strong sense of community. The residents of these communities were

predominantly Black. Many Black people owned their own land and were more affluent than their White neighbors. Whether landowners, renters, or sharecroppers, the people were usually industrious, working hard for their subsistence. They recognized the importance of education. The pillars of the community have been identified. The communities that were on the arsenal do not “fit the mold” that is generally found in the literature.

- It is probable that the fact most community members were relatives or related through marriage contributed to the bond. With the exception of a few families who were more fortunate in circumstance, most people, Black and White, had a common goal. Unlike the consumer-oriented society of today, “back then” people worked hard to meet basic needs.
- Some early Black landowners did not have recorded deeds. In some cases, when they died, reputable men who had lived in the community and had known them for many years signed sworn statements to attest to the land ownership of the deceased.
- The prominent Black families of Pond Beat and Mullins Flat can trace their ancestry back to white plantation owners in the 1800’s. Some of their ancestors were free Black people when they came to Alabama from Virginia and the Carolinas.
- Understanding family histories is important in understanding land ownership and the ties that bound the communities.
- No receipts were given to Black people, so they always owed what the White business person said they owed, whether it be at the store and dealing in credit or the amount paid on a mortgage. The businesses mentioned in particular were in Huntsville.
- Three incidents of sexual abuse of Black women, two by White plantation owners and one by the son of a White plantation owner, that took place between 1920 and 1941, were reported. The women had no recourse.
- One incident of murder was reported. It was not recorded in the interview section. While the subject had volunteered this information freely during the interview, during a later meeting the subject asked that her “telling about her daddy shooting somebody” be removed from her interview, because her daughter told her it might cause trouble.

This incident took place on a rural farmstead area of the pre-arsenal land and not in Pond Beat or Mullins Flat. The former arsenal resident told the researcher that one day “a colored man (name is known but omitted) was coming across the field toward their house and he was drunk and he was mad.” Her father said to get his shotgun. Then, the subject said, “Daddy shot him dead.”

When asked if the law had been told of this or her father had any trouble about it, the subject said no. She added that her father had gone to talk to the man's brother, but there hadn't been any trouble about it.

- One incident of the shooting (not fatal) of a woman was reported. It was not reported in the interview section. One White person and three Black people interviewed described the incident. When the researcher learned about it, she made sufficient inquiries to verify the incident was true; she concluded it was common knowledge among the members of the community where it occurred.

A divorced White woman was slipping out of her home at night to meet a Black man. People who lived in the area became aware of this. White men were watching the house. The woman slipped out and met the man in a grove of trees. She was shot. One person said, "She was shot by mistake." Further clarification was added by another person who had lived nearby. He said that during the day, the Black man who was meeting the White woman had been dressed for a social activity and was wearing all white clothing. The woman did not generally wear all white clothing. That night, the woman had put on all white clothing; the Black man she met had changed from the white clothing he'd worn during the day to darker clothing. Thus, in the darkness of the night, she was mistaken for him. The man ran and got away. He kept going--left the state. The woman was admitted to Huntsville Hospital. She did not return to the community. The police did not pursue her shooting. She had broken an unwritten law.

- An unwritten set of rules governing behavior was known to both Black people and White people. Some White people who were interviewed often commented about Black community members who were good, hardworking people. Some spoke fondly of Black people who had worked in their homes; on the other hand, these same people said, "Blacks knew their place." A Black person did not break the rules, because he himself might not be the one to pay the price—his entire family could suffer for it.

In regard to White people, some Black people said they usually kept to themselves. This was the safe thing to do. Nevertheless, one Black person said "We all got along like family." This was probably within the unwritten set of rules that were known by all. However, respect, and sometimes friendship, and neighborly acts that crossed racial lines were reported.

- There were no race-based differences in how people lived. Whether Black or White, the very poor lived in what one man called "very pitiful" houses, and those who had more resources lived in better houses. Who had more and who had less could not be differentiated along racial lines. All people grew the same crops, had the same vegetables in their gardens, and prepared their food in the same manner. They all suffered the same hardships.

- The difference between a good land owner and a bad one was: When the crops were in and “laid by,” and the only remaining work to do was the harvest, a bad land owner would tell the sharecropper he had already used up in credit his part of the profit, so he had to take his family and go. This left the family destitute, with no place to live and no food, looking for paid labor jobs, which were said to be “hard to come by.”
- Sharecropper houses were sometimes former slave cabins. The cabins were generally on four corner stones and were sometimes moved if they were needed in another location on the farm. Many of these had one room. Some had two.
- Tenant farmer or sharecropper houses sometimes had two rooms. A room was added to accommodate a large family. The first room added was directly behind one of the front two rooms, making somewhat of an L-shape. Sometimes the fourth room was added. People who bought their own land, other than the affluent, built the same type houses. Even when rooms were added, the houses were not large by today’s standards. Except in the more prominent homes, there was no living room. Chairs were put in the bedroom for company and moved back to the kitchen at mealtime. Not everyone had a bed; in large families people slept on pallets on the floor. Some houses, down by the river, were on stilts. Almost all structures had tin roofs.
- The general trend is to think of landowners as being White and sharecroppers as being Black. In Pond Beat and Mullins Flat, many landowners were Black and had sharecroppers on their property. In one instance, a Black landowner had a White sharecropper on his property.
- In a literature review one finds mention of plantation stores, or commissaries as people called them. The Chaney plantation had one in the back of their house. The location of the one on the old Shreve plantation was identified. The plantation was gone, but a woman and her many children lived in a dilapidated structure that was known to have been the Shreve “headquarters” and commissary. It is probable that identifying plantation stores through oral history is not feasible because most of the old plantations were defunct in the early 1900’s, the land divided and sold.
- Pond Beat had a community store that was first known as Woodward’s store and then Turner’s store. The structure served solely as a store. Darphus Love had a store in Mullins Flat. Gibson’s store was said to be up on the Pike in the vicinity of the Chaney property; whether it also served as a residence for the owners was not ascertained. The Fannings had a store in the Hickory Grove community; they lived in a room in the back. Sometimes a store was mentioned that was a room in someone’s house. These homes that had a room where goods were sold were considered stores by the people of the community. Since archaeological studies generally endeavor to identify “commercial sites,” this seems to pose the necessity for creating a category for stores that are a room in a residence. It is

highly probable that the only way these stores can be identified is through oral history.

- The kind of dishes people used was “whatever we could get,” and this was true for most households. More than once the researcher heard it said, “We did everything on barter, because we had everything but cash money.” People bought or traded with the same peddlers and shopped at the same stores in Huntsville and Triana. Generally, their purchases were necessities. The few families who were more affluent would have had choices. One store, now considered an historic attraction, is still on the square in Huntsville. That is Harrison’s store. Store records as well as newspaper ads could serve as a source of information for household items. People bought what was locally available.
- While three blacksmiths (one in Farley) were identified as being patronized by arsenal residents, some men who had their own farms had their own blacksmith shop and did their own work. Going further back in time, the 1880 census showed that Amanda and John Sheffield had living on their farm a farmhand who was a blacksmith.
- The excavation of outhouses is of concern to archaeologists. When the ethnoarchaeology study was discussed in a meeting with the Alabama State Archaeologist, he mentioned the importance of excavating outhouses. Some of the very “pitiful” sharecropper houses had no outhouse. Most people did have an outhouse. However, when the researcher asked if they threw their discarded items in the outhouse, the answers ranged from a polite pause and a “no,” that were accompanied by a look that implied the question was considered “odd,” at best, to one person who exclaimed, “Whatever would we want to do that for!” The researcher has asked this question of many other people of what could be called average means who were not subjects in this study and none of them threw discarded items in their outhouses. This study found that the outhouses of the tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and most of the other landowners of average means on the pre-arsenal land were not used as a place to discard their refuse, thus, excavation would not yield information.
- The location of one cemetery that was not recorded by the Army was discerned. Juanita Lassiter (p. 369) said a cemetery was on the property of Stella Tolbert McWhorter (D-166). She said the cemetery had “one tombstone and mostly unmarked graves.” [It has been shown that tombstones were removed from some known cemeteries after the Army took ownership of the land so it is probable that this occurred at the abovementioned cemetery.]

This conclusion has identified only a few of the assertions that can be developed from the data. It is suggested that future researchers draw their own framework for analyzing the data contained within the interviews. It is suggested that the data in the interviews be read in conjunction with the parcel maps and with thought to the interrelationships among the people.

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## **APPENDIX**

**HISTORIC 1909 MAP SHOWING LANDOWNERS**

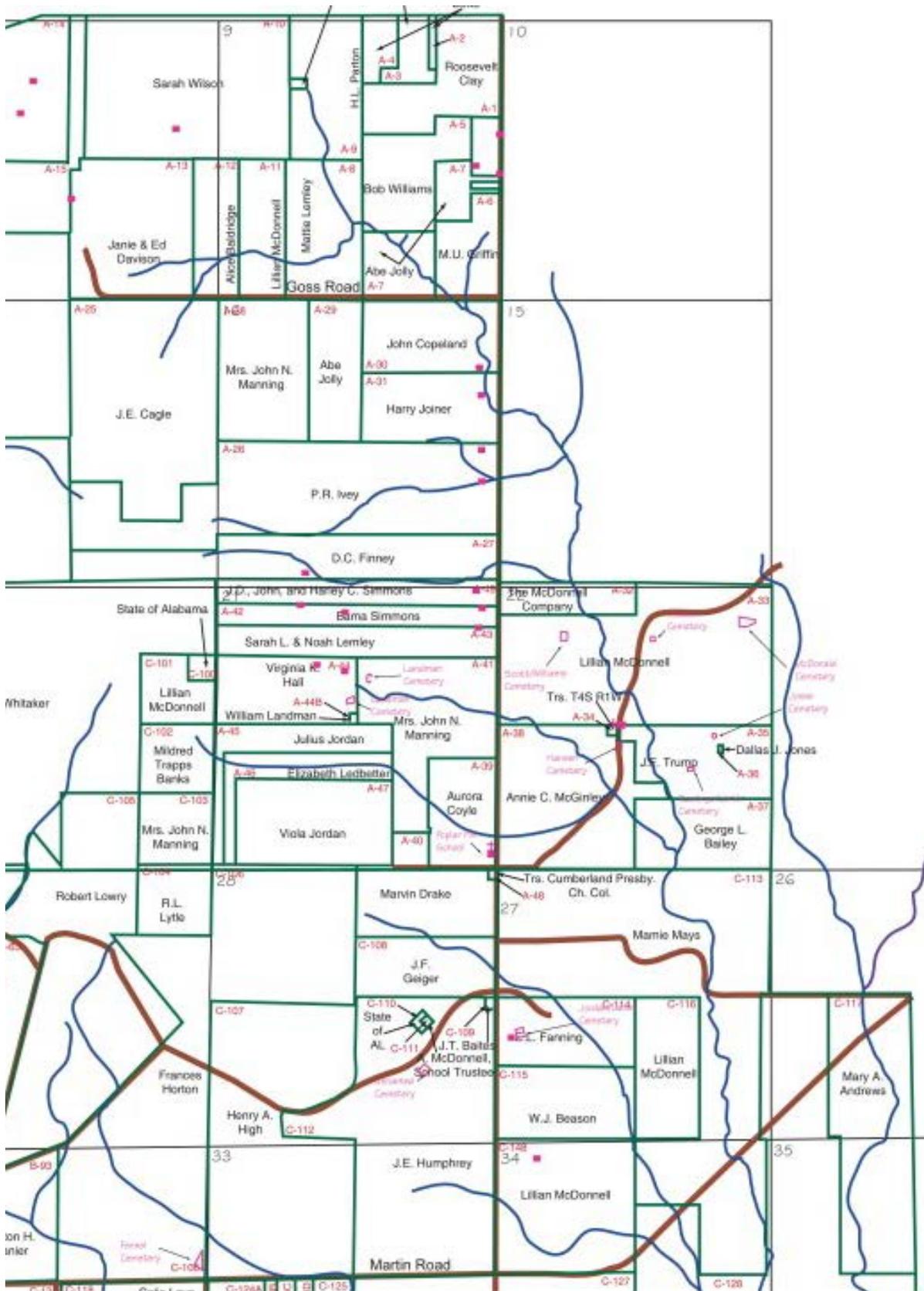
**REAL ESTATE MAPS SHOWING LAND OWNERS IN 1941**



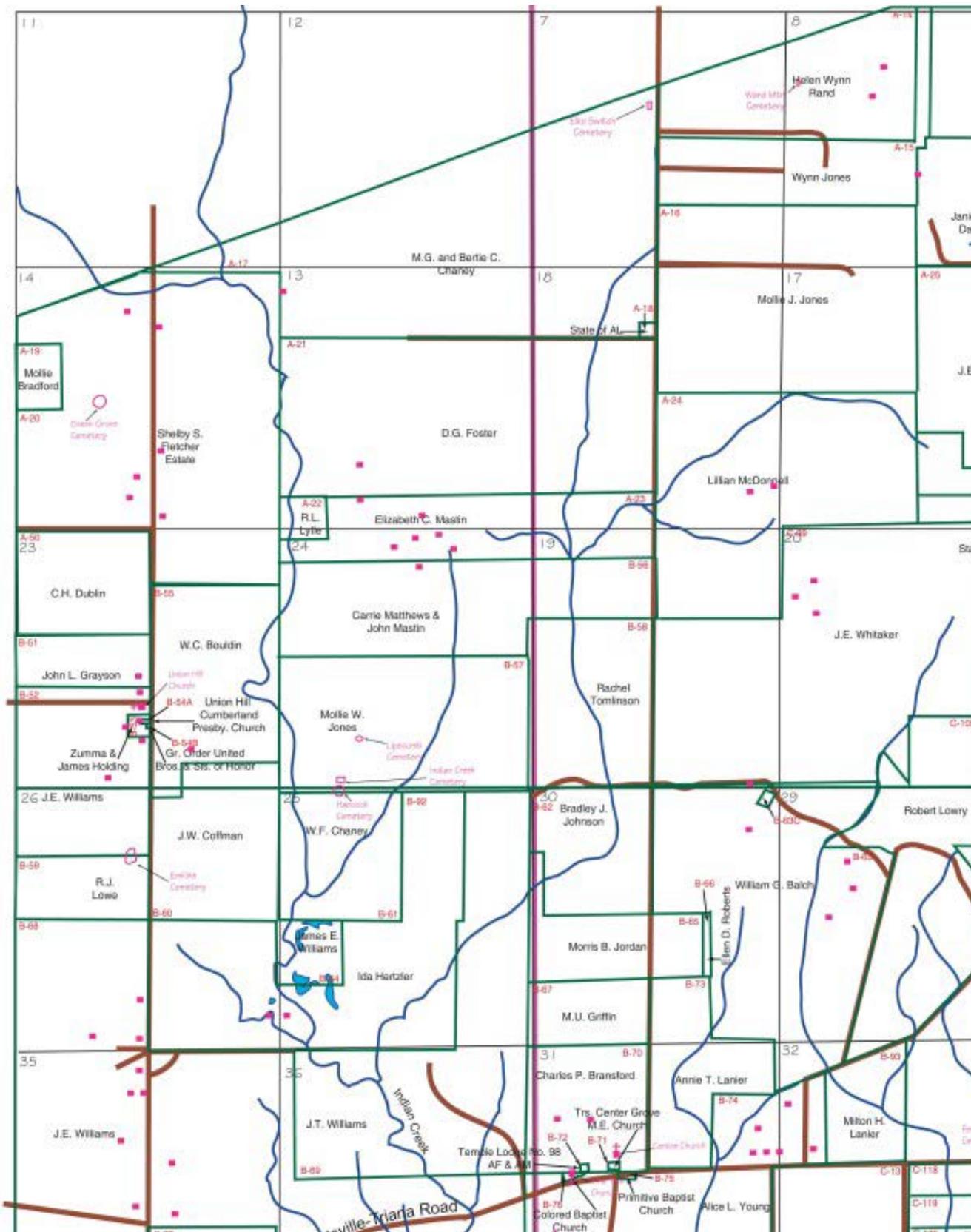
Produced by T. J. Heins

0 0.3 0.6 1.2 1.8 2.4 Miles

September 2005

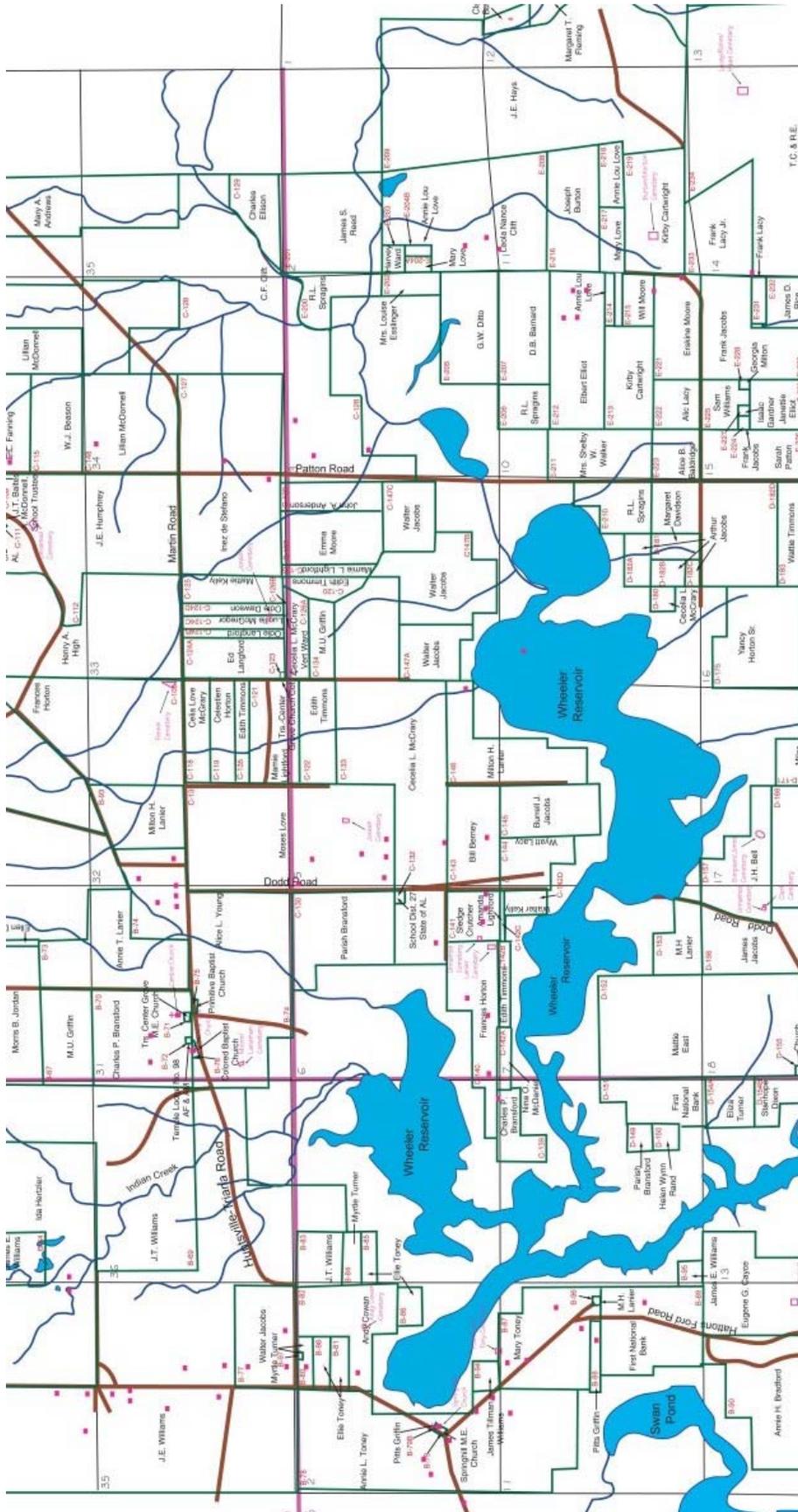


Northeast corner of the arsenal. Land owners in 1941. Source: Map created for the Army by AAC.



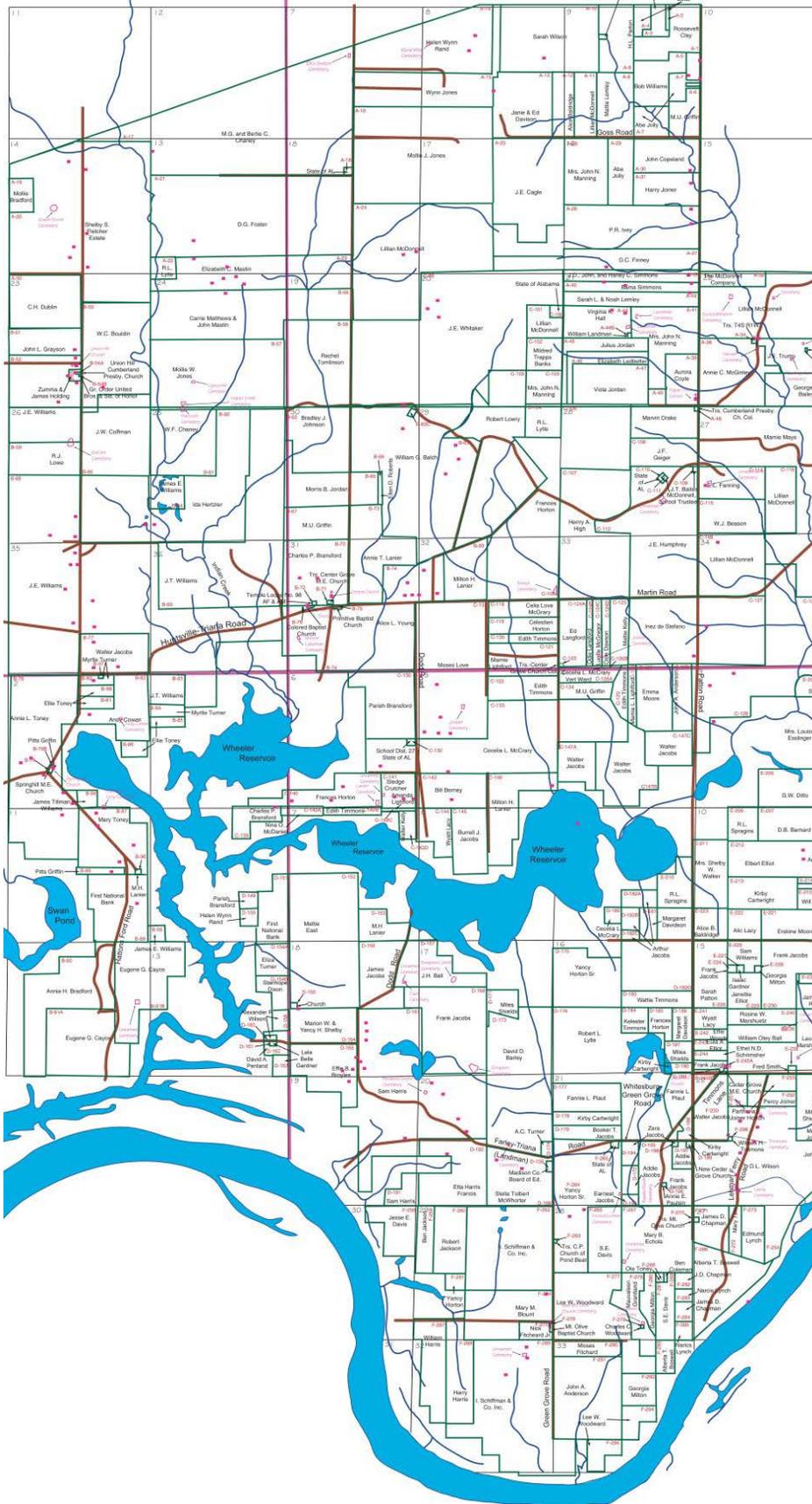
Northwest corner of the arsenal. Source: Map created for the Army by AAC.

Central part of the Arsenal. Shows property owners in Mullins Flat. Source: Map created for the Army by AAC.



The southern part of the arsenal. Shows Pond Beat property owners. Source: Map created for the Army by AAC.





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**NOTE:** Some of the source material used in this book employed only first names. Those could not be included in a meaningful way in this index and are excluded. Generally, wives are listed under both the married name and the maiden surname. Names of people (even the famous) not directly associated with the arsenal were likewise omitted in most cases. Church, school, and community names on arsenal lands are included, but names of creeks and nearby towns are not listed herein.

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