

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,