

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