



as well. The legacy of slavery from Emancipation through the mid-20th century was racial discrimination and segregation. This oppression affected every aspect of life for communities of color. In some cases segregation was the catalyst for the creation of planned communities intended to be separate and self-sufficient. Institutionalized racism is rife in historical documentation from county property and school records, to the federal census records, and in the policies and surveys of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) – all to great effect and often detriment to people of color. While institutional racism can appear to be benign, the status quo of Jim Crow on some occasions resulted in violence and unjust persecution, as in the case of the Scottsboro Boys trial.

RESEARCHING AT YOUR LOCAL ARCHIVES

Nine counties in North Alabama are included in this study: Colbert, DeKalb, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, and Morgan counties. Information was gathered from local libraries, archives, and individuals as well as online sources such as Ancestry.com. The following county archives and libraries were consulted:

Colbert County	Helen Keller Public Library
Lauderdale County	Florence Public Library; University of North Alabama, Collier Library
Lawrence County	Lawrence County Archives
Limestone County	Limestone County Archives
Madison County	Madison County Archives; Huntsville-Madison Public Library; University of Alabama-Huntsville, Salmon Library
Morgan County	Morgan County Archives

Many counties in Alabama have a county archive, but not all. In North Alabama, only four of the nine counties have an official archive. In Madison County, it is paired with the public library in Huntsville. Counties that do not have separate archives may have records stored at local libraries or courthouses. Many of the records for Lauderdale County are held at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library. The research sources available in each county can differ greatly. Libraries in the county seat often have a heritage room with books and documents pertaining to local history and geared towards genealogy. The library staff are typically knowledgeable about searching records and most libraries have subscription services, such as Ancestry.com, available on public computers. One thing to keep in mind when researching original documents at repositories is that they often only have what has been donated to them or what the staff has actively reproduced on their own – records may not be complete and/or in the best condition.

Types of records that can be useful when researching individuals, families, or communities include, but are not limited to: land and tax maps, property books, historic photographs, school censuses, records on marriages, births, deaths, churches, and military service, and wills and probate records. Land and property records can be useful to determine who owned or lived in a particular place. Most cities and towns were surveyed and platted, including communities that never came to fruition. Maps and associated documentation for towns and neighborhoods may be on file at the archives. Accompanying the plat