

bought a smaller farm. Ms. Maureen’s brothers had little interest in carrying on their father’s farming profession. They went to Tuskegee University and Hampton University for a higher education.

Ms. Maureen graduated from Councill High School and then Alabama A&M University with a degree in accounting. She continued to work at A&M in the Accounts Receivable and Student Accounting departments for 25 years.

Ms. Peggy Allen Towns



Ms. Peggy Allen Towns was born in Decatur, Morgan County, Alabama. She attended Cherry Street School and Lakeside High School, as well as Decatur High School – a unique experience bridging segregation and integration. Her parents were George Washington and Myrtle Lyle Allen. George Allen and his brother purchased a house in the 1940s on Church Street. Ms. Towns’ maternal family are the Lyles from Trinity, Alabama

in Morgan County. Her grandmother, Bertha Polk Lyle, was the daughter of a slave named Allen Polk (owned by President James K. Polk in Maury County, Tennessee). She was the first African American preacher pastor in Decatur. She received her license to pastor the church in 1953 after she started preaching in 1944. Ms. Towns’ father was from Jackson County, born in 1922. As a nine-year-old, he remembers the police

(Right) Ms. Bertha Polk Lyle, Ms. Allen's Grandmother



searching for the boys who would be held on trial as the Scottsboro Boys. George W. Allen left Jackson County and a job on a farm for a job on the railroad. He later ended up in Decatur working for the Southern Cotton Oil Mill and then Goodyear Tire & rubber Company before retiring at 62 years old. He continued his work as a deacon at the Bell-Nebo Primitive Baptist Church until his death.

Ms. Allen worked at a plant after college, but found she was better suited to the Agricultural Extension Service – at which she gave over 13 years of career. Afterwards, she worked for Congressman Bud Cramer for 20 years, retiring in 2011. In her retirement, she researches local African American history and has written two books. An ancestor on her parental side named George Allen was a member of the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War. George’s pension records mention that he was captured on Coleman Hill at Fort Henderson in Athens, Limestone County, Alabama and taken to Mobile, Alabama as a POW. Research into George Allen culminated in Ms. Towns’ book, *Duty Driven: The Plight of North Alabama African Americans During the Civil War*. Although the infamous trials of nine young boys in the 1930s became known as the Scottsboro Boys, the majority of the trials took place in Decatur. Ms. Towns wrote her second book, *Scottsboro Unmasked: Decatur’s Story*, about the impacts of the trials on the city of Decatur.

Dr. Rev. Wylheme H. Ragland

Dr. Ragland is a retired United Methodist minister, freelance writer, and the curator of two collections of African American history. He writes extensively on the Schaudies-Banks family, a prominent African American family of Decatur, Morgan County, Alabama. Dr. Ragland has lived in Decatur since 1977. That’s when he met Miss Athelyne Celeste Banks. He spent years as her pastor, confidante, and close friend. His love of history and Ms. Banks led to his research into the interesting family.

The Schaudies were from Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama. Samuel Schaudies, Ms. Banks’ maternal grandfather,



(Left) Dr. Rev. Wylheme H. Ragland was enslaved by Frank Otto Schaudies, a shoemaker from Germany. Samuel was taught shoemaking, a trade he continued after Emancipation when he moved to Decatur. The Banks family is a “pre-Civil War” family from Decatur. Miss Banks’ paternal grandfather was Matthew Hewlett Banks, the second elected black city councilman in Decatur after Reconstruction. The Schaudies-

Banks family has many more remarkable members – landowners, a notary public, a World War I soldier, a doctor, founders of the King’s Memorial United Methodist Church. Ms. Banks, herself, was the first female of color in Decatur to be a school principal. The house where she was born, the Schaudies-Banks Cottage, still stands in Decatur.

The Reverend has delved into other areas of interest into the history of African Americans in Decatur, Morgan County, and North Alabama. Other interests include an early landowner of color named Robert Murphy, who owned over 300 acres in Morgan County and the Breeding family. The Breedings were a unique case of a mixed son receiving land from his white father’s inheritance – a local landmark case in 1899.

Mr. John Patrick Jordan

Mr. Jordan was born in Huntsville in 1960, his family is originally from the Mullins Flat/Pond Beat area that is now Redstone Arsenal. His great-grandfather, James “Jim” Jordan married Elizabeth Jacobs. Together they had nine children – the eldest, Murphy Jordan, was John’s grandfather. Murphy married Helen Jones and had 17 children, creating a very large family. The Jordans were farmers on the Redstone land and Murphy bought a “substantial sized” farm to the west of the Redstone Arsenal boundary near Triana. Growing up, Mr. Jordan remembers the family