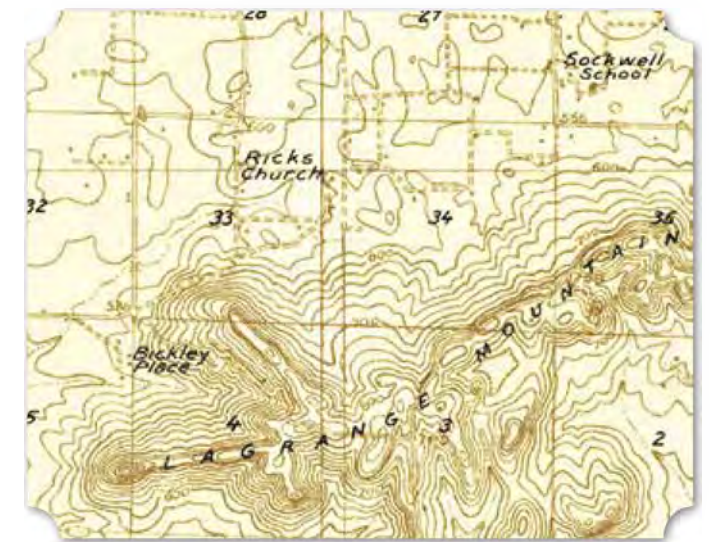




(Left) "School Buses Cherokee High School Colbert County, Alabama;" November 3, 1937 (National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta. TVA Historic Photograph Collection, Colbert Co., Alabama Photograph No. 3464 A) (Lower Left) Aerial Photograph of Cherokee in 1950 (University of Alabama, Historical Map Collection, Online)



(Above) 1924 USGS Topographic Map of Ricks Church, Tuscumbia, Alabama Quadrangle

7 Church of Christ and Ricks Cemetery

Located southwest of Leighton and University of North Alabama Highway

is Ricks Lane. Nearby is the antebellum plantation, The Oaks, owned by Abraham Ricks in the mid-19th century. The church is said to have been built by Ricks, a member of the Church of Christ, for his slaves sometime around 1825. Contrarily, according to the *Restoration Journal* by the Church of Christ, the church was built by Abraham Ricks, Jr. sometime after his father's death in 1852. Regardless which date is correct, the Ricks Church is one of the oldest African American churches in Colbert County and North Alabama.

Several churches were established from the original Ricks Church, which was then deemed the "Mother Church" and the others referred to as "Branches." These branches include the High Street Church

of Christ in Tuscumbia, Cherokee Church of Christ in Cherokee, Sterling Boulevard Church of Christ in Sheffield, West Church of Christ in Leighton, Reedtown Church of Christ in Russellville (Franklin County), and the Church of Christ in Fayetteville (Talladega County). The Mother Church was considered the home of the African American Church of Christ congregation and the members of all other African American churches in the area used to come back to the Ricks Church once a year for a service.

The Church also served as a school for slaves and later, freed children of African Americans. The school was called The Oaks, like the plantation, or The Oaks School, and later, Ricks School. Abraham Ricks' wife, Charlotte Ricks, was known to teach Bible classes to the Ricks slaves before the church was established. The school grew with time and eventually taught classes from kindergarten through ninth grades. Some of the teachers known to have taught at The Oaks School in the 1930s were: Ms. Ophelia Coffee in 1931, followed by Ms. Virginia Mayes, then Ms. Lizzie Steele in 1934, and Ms. Griffin taught until the school was closed in 1937. Former known students of The Oaks School are: Sadie Cobb, Mattie Crawley-Gunn, Frankie Mullins Davis, Otelia Long, J. B. and Ellis Marvin, Susan McClam, Alfred and Gladys Mullins, Marvin Ricks, Abie and George D. Sledge, Rosie Vinson, and Emma Jean King-White.

