

Some of the original attendees of the church were the George Ricks family. George Ricks was taught to read and write by Charlotte Ricks and later traveled extensively in North Alabama to preach. As of 1885, Ricks Church, or the Christian Home, had 96 members and six preachers. George Ricks baptized over 300 people as the church's Parson, the title for all preachers of color at the time.

Parson George Ricks rose from a slave on The Oaks Plantation to become one of the earliest African American landowners in North Alabama. Abraham Ricks, Jr. is said to have given his slaves land to farm after the Civil War. Parson Ricks grew cotton and purchased 320 acres of land near the plantation. He also deeded half an acre of his land for the use of a cemetery, now the George Ricks Cemetery. The majority of those buried there are the former slaves of Abraham Ricks and their descendants.

The cemetery's first marked interment is that of Eliza Ricks (1831-1899), the wife of Parson George Ricks.

However, the cemetery's entrance reads 1873. The majority of the early graves are marked simply with fieldstones and cinderblocks. Several of the concrete markers are handmade, inscribed with the name, date of birth, and date of death. This was a fairly common practice for African American communities in the South in the early 20th century.

The George Ricks Cemetery is still active and has at least 72 marked graves and an unknown number of unmarked graves. It is located at the end of Ricks Cemetery Road, south of Ricks Lane. Besides George Ricks and his family, other common surnames in Ricks Cemetery include, Brow, Deloney, Hosendove, Long, Mullins, Sledge, and Underwood. Abie Sledge (1908-2000) is the only former student of The Oaks School known to be buried at the cemetery. His grandmother, also buried there, was Emma Ricks Sledge (1866-1954). Ms. Emma Sledge was a cook at The Oaks and

(Below) Photograph of the Entrance of George Ricks Cemetery, 2012 (Findagrave.com, User Anna Popejoy)

a midwife to both white and people of color. She was interviewed by the Library of Congress in 1930 when The Oaks was also photographed.

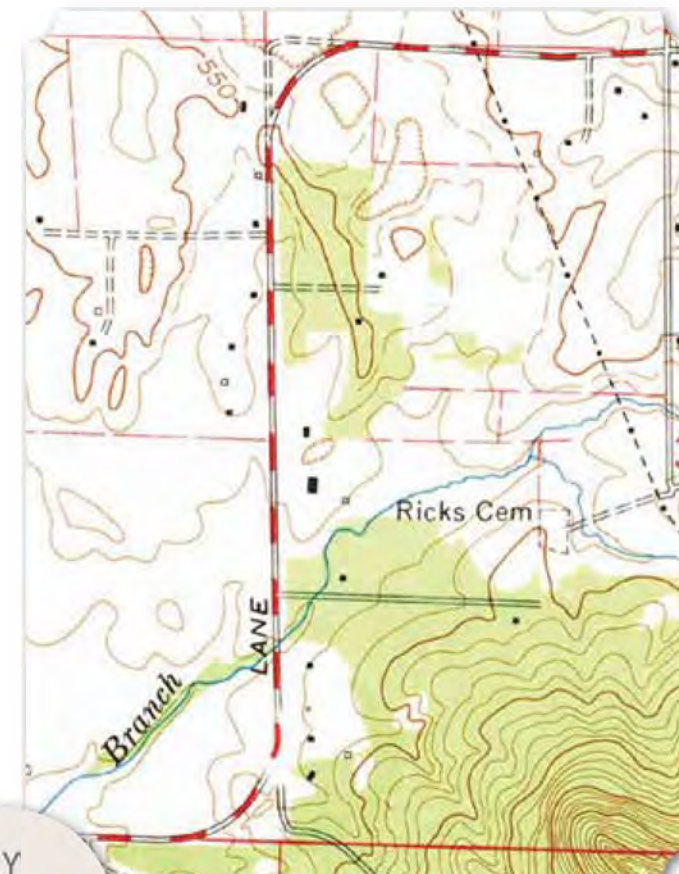


(Above) The Pulpit and Pews of Ricks Church (Ancestry.com, User Laura Corbett) **(Below)** 1971 USGS/TVA Topographic Map of Ricks Church and Cemetery, Leighton, Alabama Quadrangle



(Above) Photograph of Rick's Church of Christ (Google Street View, July 2014)

The church and "Geo." Ricks' land is marked on an 1896 map of Colbert County. "Ricks Church" is labeled on a 1924 and 1936 USGS/TVA topographic map. Although present since at least the late 19th century, Ricks Cemetery is first mapped on the 1971 USGS topographic map. The church that stands today is the third iteration of the building dating from 1940. After the first log church built by Abraham Ricks in 1825, the building was rebuilt at some unknown time. That second building was used until at least 1937. Many of the materials, including the pews, of the second church were used in creating the third. The church and its accompanying cemetery were listed on the Alabama Register in 1988.



KEY

- COMMUNITIES
- CEMETERIES
- CHURCHES
- PLANTATIONS
- SCHOOLS
- OTHER

8 ■ Douthit Cemetery

The Douthit Cemetery is located in northwest Colbert County on the edge of Pickwick Lake at the Alabama-Mississippi border between Riverton Rose Trail and Colbert County Park. The cemetery presently has about 165 graves. When the WPA surveyed the

* Indicates a Historical - Non-Extant Resource