

sometime between 1916 and 1924 – when the school appears in this location but is not labeled. This relocation can cause confusion because there are no 1920s maps for the northern portion of this area.

The Mt. Pleasant church, cemetery, and school are present on the 1952/1953 USGS topographic map, which identifies the area as “Underwood Crossroads” – as it is today. By the 1950s, there are three churches along County Line Road named Mt. Pleasant Church. By 1971, the school is no longer labeled; Mt. Pleasant School most likely closed due to integration.

The Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery is located just north of the church. The cemetery has 81 burials on record, although there are doubtless many more graves in the five-acre cemetery that are either not marked or not recorded fully. Interestingly, the two earliest burials on record are those of the infant son of Allen and Annie Abernathy in 1911 – an African American child – and the infant son of Charles and Katie Lou Jordan Harrison in 1913 – a white child. From 1901 to 1968, the state of Alabama’s Constitution mandated that cemeteries be segregated. These two burials indicate at least some integration in the early 20th century occurred. Perhaps with further research it can be determined the full extent of this cemetery’s history.

Those buried at the Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery include some local farming landowners. Flem J. Abernathy (1879-1953) owned a farm in the Leighton area in 1900. William (W.) I. Abernathy (1868-1927) owned a farm in the Brick census district to the north from at least 1900 to 1920. His grave monument is a large and impressive obelisk adorned with the symbol of the Free Masons. James H. Bean (1888-1936) grew up on his father’s

**(Opposite Page, Exerpts) (Top)** 1900 Federal Census Excerpt Showing Flem Abernathy Owning a Farm (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) **(Middle)** 1900 Federal Census Excerpt Showing Will Abernathy Owning a Farm (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) **(Bottom)** 1910 Federal Census Excerpt Showing Charley Bean Owning a Farm (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com)

farm in Brick – Charley Bean owned his farm from at least 1910 to 1930. James Henry Bean was also a Mason. His son, Walter James Bean (1915-1957) is buried in the cemetery with his father. Walter was a WWII veteran. Lastly, other family names in the Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery include Brawley, Eggleston, Jarmon, Koger, Madden, and Stanley.

The Mt. Pleasant School was one of the eight Rosenwald schools in Colbert County. It was an early school built under the instruction of the Tuskegee Institute most likely in the mid-1910s. It was a small, one-room, one-teacher schoolhouse. The school cost a total of \$1,100 to build with \$500 donated from the African American community, \$300 from public funds, and another \$300 from the Rosenwald Fund.

## 23 ■ Muscle Shoals



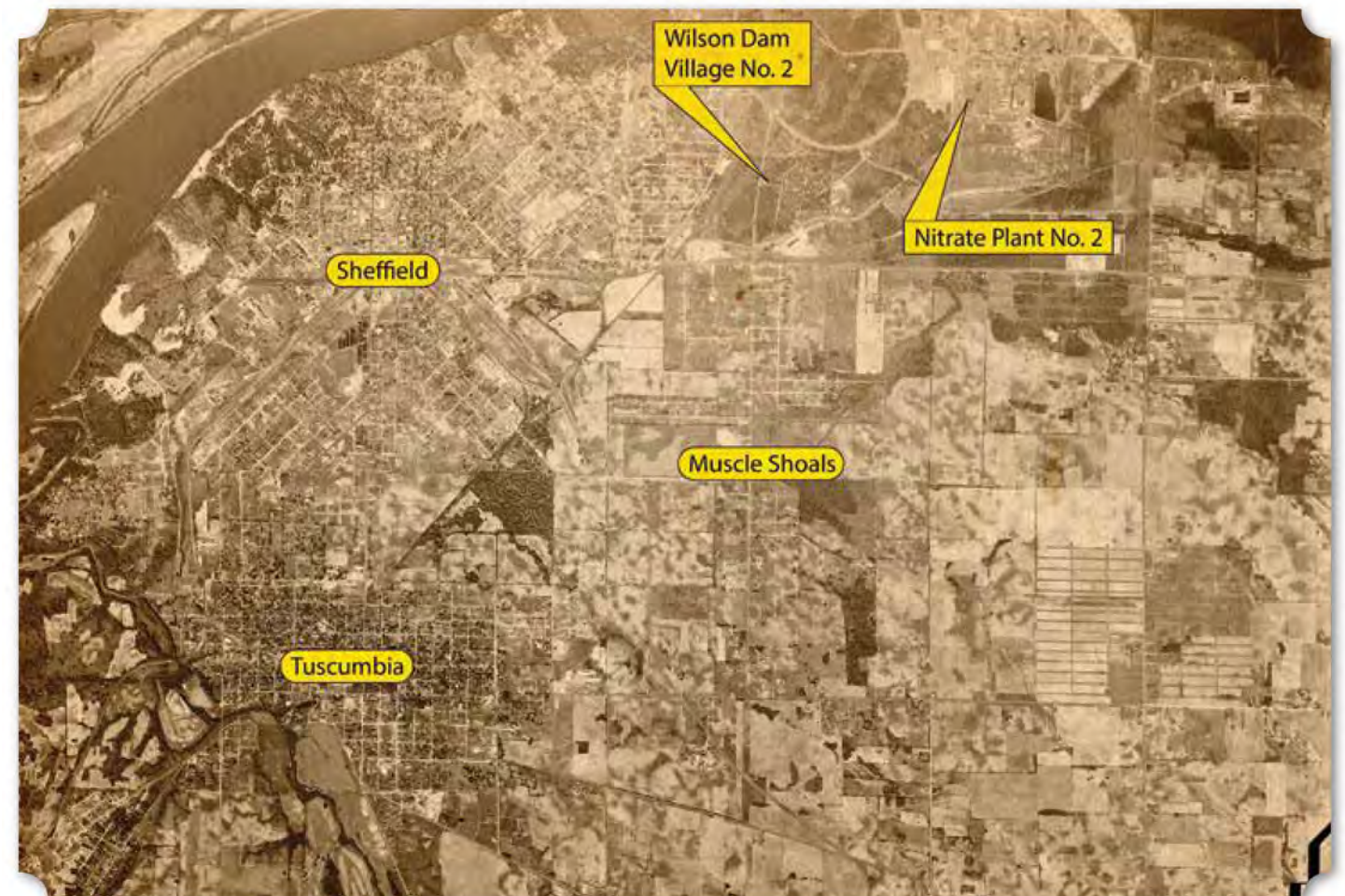
**(Above)** The Sign that Welcomes All to the City of Muscle Shoals (AtlanticRecords.com)

Named for the mussels in the Tennessee River, Muscle Shoals began on the outskirts of Sheffield with the construction of U.S. Nitrate Plant No. 2 and Wilson Dam in 1918. While the plant was created for the war effort, by 1921 the plant was idle and motor giant Henry Ford had plans to buy a large area around the plant and dam and build a “city 75 miles long and employ one million people.” While Ford’s plans never completely came to fruition, a real estate boom

started and many of the cotton fields were bought by developers and transformed into subdivisions. This development continued to expand into the mid-20th century, and soon Muscle Shoals, Tuscumbia, and Sheffield were connected into one large “Tri-City” area.

Muscle Shoals was officially established in 1923 and became known more for industry rather than agriculture. Wilson Dam and the TVA supplied power to large plants like Reynolds Metals, Union Carbide, Diamond Shamrock, and Ford Motor Company. Nonetheless, some of the southern and eastern extents of the area farther away from the Tri-City retains some agriculture. While Muscle Shoals was

**(Below)** Aerial Photograph of the Tri-City Area – Sheffield, Tuscumbia, and Muscle Shoals – in 1953 (University of Alabama, Historical Map Collection, Online)



enumerated as a separate district in the 1920 census, there were no landowners and the majority of those individuals counted were living and/or working at the Nitrate Plant. In 1930, there were 155 households enumerated, 44 (28%) of which were African American. Of these African American households, nine of them were farmers who owned their own land – 20% of the African American community of Muscle Shoals. Four of the households were owned by members of the Pearsall family. By 1940, there were 399 households enumerated in Muscle Shoals. A total of 117 (29%) of these households were African American and 21 of them owned a farm.

Muscle Shoals is known for its rich history of music, the “Muscle Shoals Sound.” Florence native William C. Handy is often credited with beginning a musical revolution when he popularized a sound that combined African American traditional, spiritual songs with secular tones to create the Blues. There