

# 2.

## DEKALB, JACKSON, AND MARSHALL COUNTIES HISTORICAL PLACES

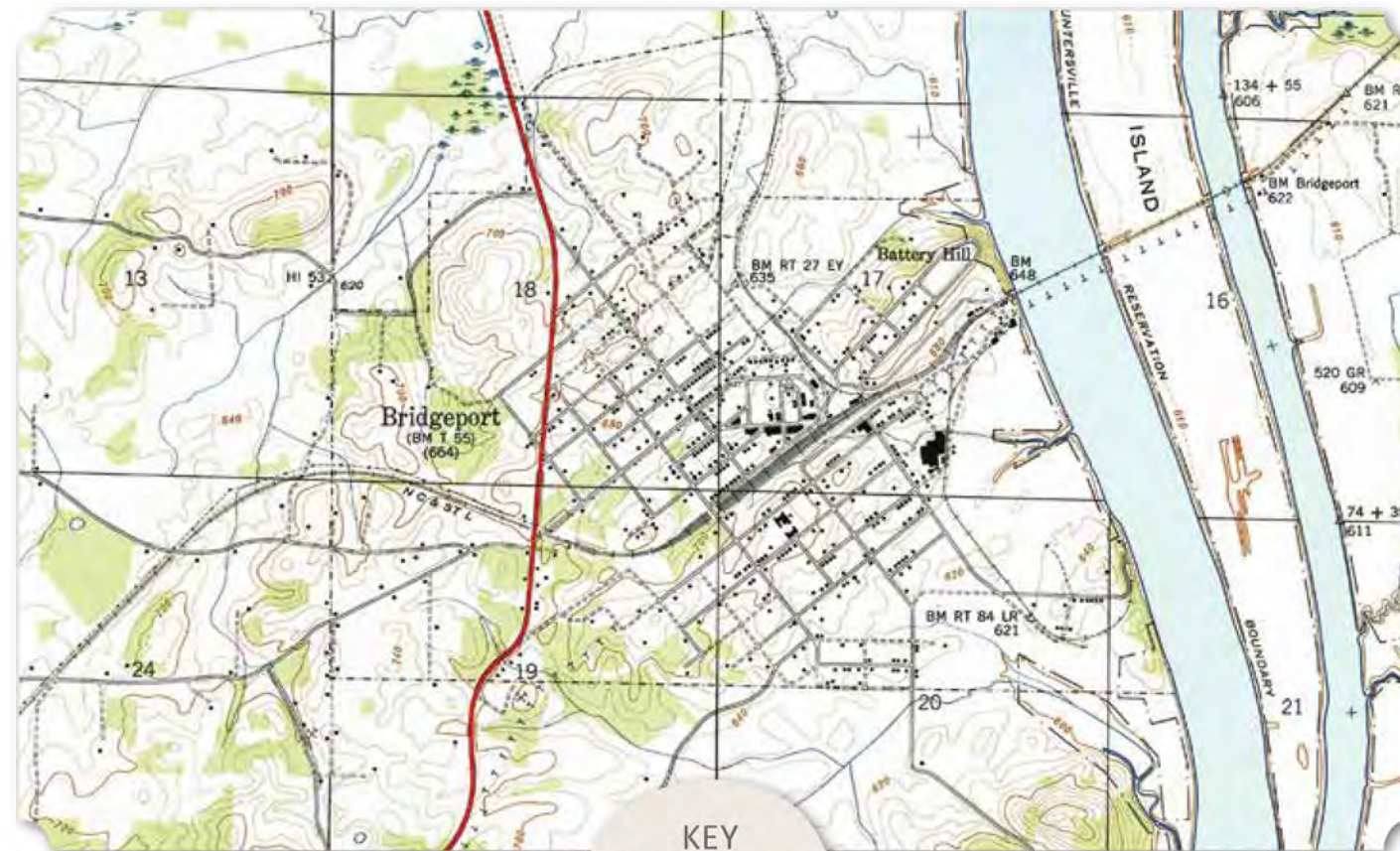
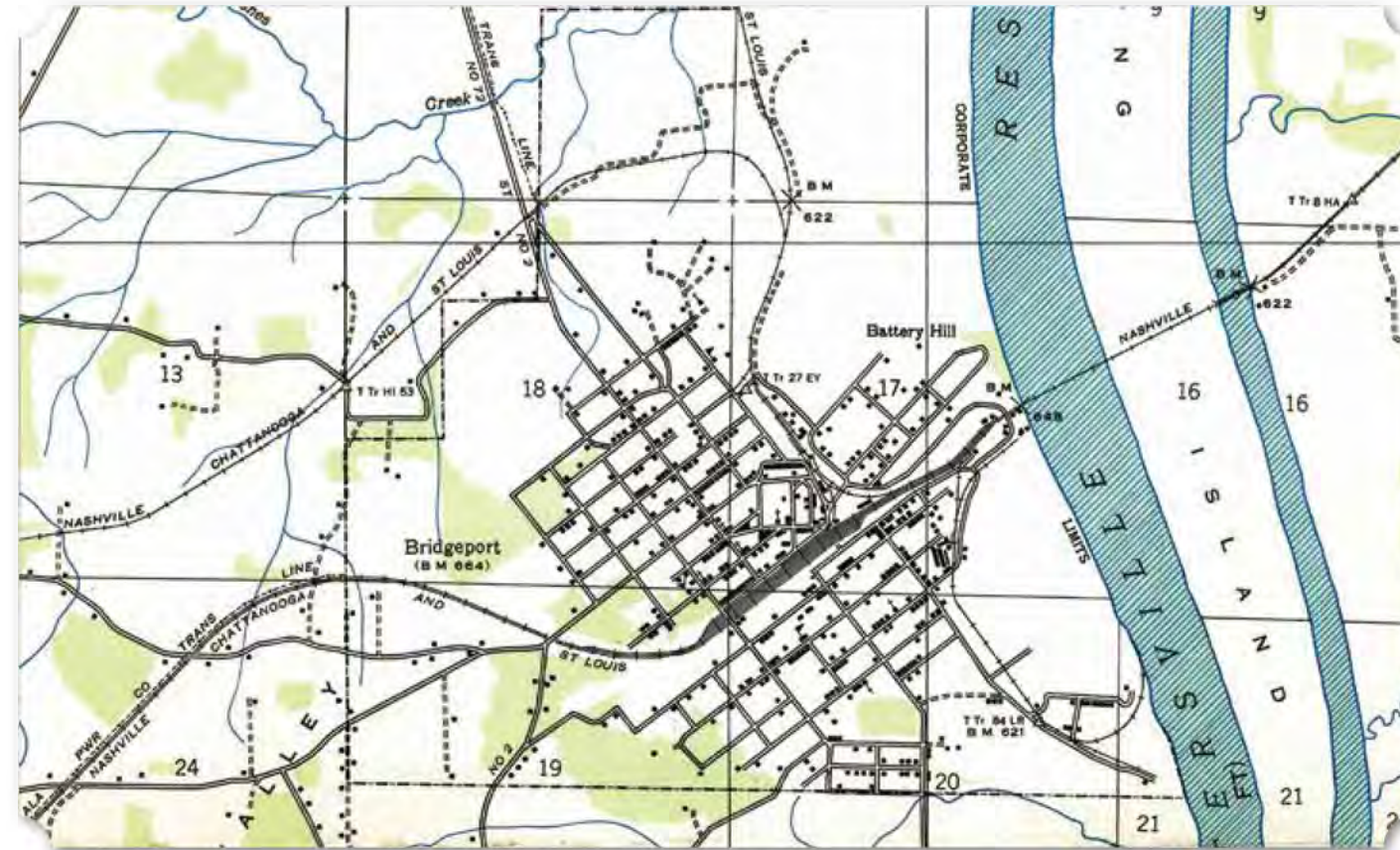
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#### Bridgeport

The city of Bridgeport is located in northeast Jackson County along the Tennessee River near the Tennessee border. Its African American population was only 15% (61 households) in 1900, the peak number percentage in the early 20th century. The total number of African American households declined to 52 (9%) in 1910 and then further to 49 (8%) in 1920 and 1930. There were only 40 (6%) households of color in Bridgeport in 1940 and all of them lived on the north side of the city proper.

The trend in African American landowning farmers differed from the overall population but was never greater than seven total landowners. In 1900, there were five African American landowning farmers in the area. By 1910, there were only four, two of whom owned previously. In 1920, there were seven total landowners. However, by 1930, there were no African American landowning farmers in Bridgeport. While there were some families who owned houses in the town, there were no families of color living outside

(Top Right) 1936 USGS Topographic Map of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, Alabama Quadrangle (Right) 1945 USGS Topographic Map of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, Alabama Quadrangle



**KEY**

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

the town and none owning a farm. Furthermore, by 1940, all families of color were living exclusively on the north side of Bridgeport town.

The surnames of owners include: Hill, Gilliam, McFarland, Cubbs, Price, Sharp, Walker, Berry, Bingham, and Slaughter. There was only one surname with two members, William B. and Alex Hill. Alexander Hill owned a farm in Bridgeport from at least 1900 to 1920. George S. Gilliam owned a farm from 1900 to 1910. Thomas Sharp and William Hill owned in 1910 and 1920.

Bridgeport's early history focused on agriculture, like the rest of North Alabama. While Huntsville and Florence were large ports for the distribution of cotton via the Tennessee River, Bridgeport sought to benefit as well by establishing a river landing. By 1853, the town no longer needed to rely solely on the river for transportation because the Nashville & Chattanooga (N & C) Railroad built a line and a bridge through what was then called Jonesville. This bridge proved so important that the town was renamed for it - Bridgeport. However, this benefit to the area soon became a point of contention as the Civil War broke out. Bridgeport was eyed as a strategic point of control by both the Union and Confederate armies for its railroad and river access. The Union forces took control of the town in April 1862, but by the summer of 1863, a battle broke out and the Confederate troops burned much of Bridgeport as they retreated. During the Union's occupation, Bridgeport served as a field hospital and a shipyard for building steamships as well as providing supplies to General Sherman across the state line in Georgia via the river.

After the war, the economy of Bridgeport shifted from agriculture to industry and the town experienced a large boom in the 1890s. The busy railroad had 18 passenger trains a day pass through Bridgeport in 1891 and a total of 28 passenger trains a day by 1900. More factories and wealthy homes than farms and fields, Bridgeport became a bustling city along the river in the early 20th century. The downtown area was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. Included in the district is the railroad depot with a unique Mission Revival style built for the N & C

\* Indicates a Historical - Non-Extant Resource