

Ms. Towns' research uncovered transcripts from the court records of the 11 men who testified. She says that they essentially

"tell about their qualifications to serve as jurors. Most of them had two or more college degrees. They were

professionals, who lived in the Old Town community, which is actually the oldest community in Decatur, Alabama. They were doctors. They were dentists. They were high school principals. They were business owners, just professional men. It took a lot of courage."

But even more surprising for Ms. Towns than coming across a little-known piece of history is that she knew many of these men growing up as a child - several that testified, several that were on the lists of qualified potential jurors. She attests to the fact that "most writers that talk about the Scottsboro trial, they only mention the list of names that Dr. Frank Sykes had" testified to, but Dr. Newlyn E. Cashin, a physician, Hewlett J. Banks, a plasterer, and Reverend Lester R. Womack of the First Baptist Church on Vine Street all testified and provided a list of qualified African American jurors.



(Left) Unknown African American Witness on the Stand, 1935 (Morgan County Archives) **(Above)** Dr. Frank Sykes at trial in Decatur, 1933 (Morgan County Archives)

Testifying in court may seem pedestrian enough to readers today, but Ms. Towns urges everyone to "keep in mind, this is in the 1930s and the Klan, it was rampant during the trials." The KKK tried, and often succeeded, to intimidate people of color. "Crosses were burned in front of Dr. Frank Sykes' house. Crosses were burned here on Bank Street [Decatur], down the street. And crosses were burned at the train depot," she says as she points around in the general direction of these local landmarks.

