



**(Above)** Brothers Dr. Newlyn E. Cashin and James Cashin at the Time of the Trial (Morgan County Archives)

“We had a trial that we didn’t ask for,” Ms. Towns speaks for Decatur in the 1930s. Decatur was chosen as the site of the trials and the local community considered it had nothing to do with them. Although the violence and terror brought upon the African American community of Old Town was understandably most unwanted, the community eventually came together to stand against those who would prefer to

keep them silent. Along with the change of venue for the trial, came a new lawyer, a Jewish man from New York City. According to Ms. Towns, one of the first things Mr. Leibowitz did was cross “the railroad track, which is always the dividing line,” for racial distribution in the South. Ms. Towns continues to describe Mr. Leibowitz's actions.

He met with people “at the historic First Baptist Church, which is right down the street on Vine Street and he met with these professional people. He met with the community leaders. One of their objectives was for the blacks to show up in court every single day and they did. This was a frightful time for many blacks. People were fired. If they were asked what their opinion was and they told what it was, they lost their jobs. The Klan and their scare tactics frightened some people. There was a young boy, who was killed during the trials. His name was James Royal. I was so surprised, and thankful at the same time, to see his dirt in the lynching museum in Montgomery.”

**"This room is fascinating..."**

As Ms. Towns tells this story, she is sitting in the exhibit at the Morgan County Archives, surrounded by photographs of the accused young boys, their lawyers, the judge, the reporters, and the people of Decatur. But most stirring are the artifacts, the chairs that once held the people in those photographs. Ms. Towns describes what its like to be in that room.

“This room is fascinating in that you look around and you see the photographs of the trials. I’m actually sitting in a chair, a witness chair. There was a box, actually, that the witness stepped upon and sat in the chair.” Another chair in the room “is one of the swivel chairs for the jurors.”

The room can be particularly emotional. But it can also be inspiring.

“It was just amazing to find little nuggets of local history as I wrote my book. I found out that Judge T.C. Allman

actually assisted the defense with selecting a jury. No one had said that. It’s those little nuggets of local history that I put in my book and that I want to share with the world.”

**(Below)** Ms. Peggy Allen Towns in the Exhibit about the Scottsboro Boys at the Morgan County Archives Created from Her Research (Photograph by Jenna Tran)

