

dropped to seven, but was back up to 10 by 1940. Other landowners from this time include Richmond W. Boddie, Bill Armstead, Wash Williams, and Mary Thompson. Gravelly Springs did not experience the decline of the African American population that areas such as Oakland, Woodland, and Smithsonia did between 1930 and 1940; instead, it remained one-third African American.

(Lower Left) 1936 USGS Topographic Map of Mt. Zion Church and School, Sinking Creek and Cherokee, Alabama Quadrangles **(Below)** 1972 USGS Topographic Map of Mt. Zion School, Church, and Cemetery, Sinking Creek and Cherokee, Alabama Quadrangles **(Bottom)** 1988 USGS Topographic Map of Mt. Zion Church, and Cemetery, Sinking Creek and Cherokee, Alabama Quadrangles

William Irons, Wash Williams, and Robert Summerhill all still own a farm. John, William, and George Summerhill also own farms. Other African American landowners are Felix Thompson, Jake Russell, Mary Reeder, Liza Armstead, Felix Barnett, Floyd Armstead, Berge Clemmons, Sateria Thompson, Saphonia Parker, and Sam Anderson.

Turnley (1874-1928), the daughter of Berry "Tut" Parker (1833-1904) and Catherine (1843-1933). The Parkers' memorial stands out because of a large slab of stone proudly declaring the Parkers as "Slaves, Sharecroppers, Landowners, Parents of 15 children." All of their children are also listed on the stone - Moses, Hannah, Martha, Annie, Isom, Tommie, Madgie, Mary Frances, Louis, Richard, Berry, Jr., Wylodine, Cornelia, Ellis, and Nelson.

Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1886 by five former slaves: Clumbus Barnett, Isaac Duckett, William Duckett, Randolph Irons, and Jerry Turnley. Anita Cobb, Turnley's great-great-granddaughter, gave an oral history interview to the Florence African American Heritage Project in 2017 and recalled the history of the church. She said that the community was originally connected to the St. Paul Church in Florence, which was too far away. Members started attending church in Oak Grove, but eventually came to Rhodesville. The Mt. Zion AME Church is not in its original location, which was further north off of Waterloo Road. Ms. Anita says that "after the population shifted and they moved to the south side of that road, that's when they moved the church."

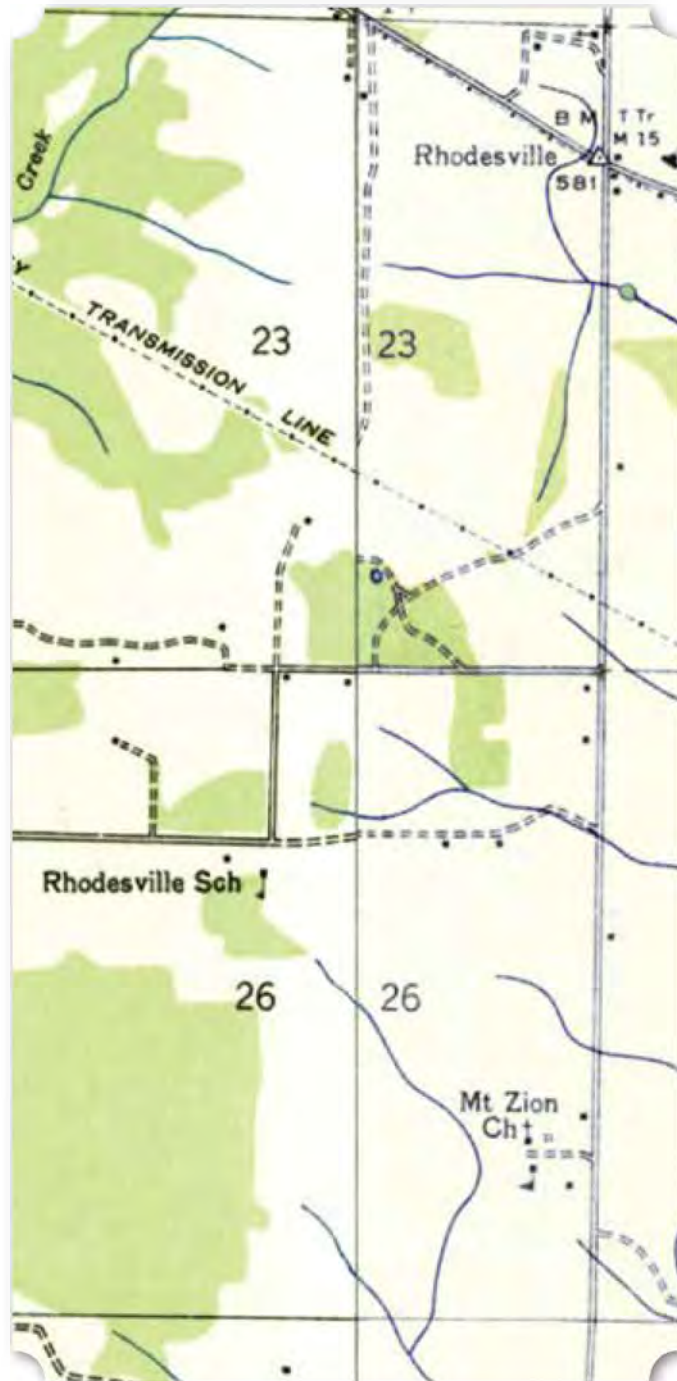


(Above) Part of the Memorial for the Parkers Listing their Children, 2014 (Findagrave.com, User Joy Favors)

The church that stands at County roads 189 and 186, was built in 1912. Jerry Turnley's son, John "was the person who owned the land and he built the church." The cemetery was established about 1930. Before then, Ms. Cobb said most people were buried in a field cemetery established before Emancipation. That cemetery's exact location is unclear, but it was somewhere off of County Road 81. The first burial at Mt. Zion AME Church Cemetery is Madgie Parker

The only census records for Berry Parker are from 1880 and 1900. While the 1880 census did not record whether someone owned their land, the 1900 census clearly states that Parker rented his farm. However, the elaborate grave marker proclaiming the Parkers to be landowners clearly suggests otherwise. It is possible that Tut and his wife were able to buy the farm in the last years of his life.

(Below) Image of Mt. Zion AME Church, 2014 (Findagrave.com, User Joy Favors)



KEY

- COMMUNITIES
- CEMETERIES
- CHURCHES
- PLANTATIONS
- SCHOOLS

Also buried at the Mt. Zion AME Church Cemetery is Joe B. Thompson (1866-1947), possibly the same "Uncle Joe" that Anita mentions who was married to Anita's grandmother's aunt. Mr. Thompson owned a farm in the Bend of the River from at least 1900 to 1940, probably until his death. He is one of many in the local community who helped make this church and community what it has been for more than 100 years. The cemetery is still in use and includes other local surnames such as Boddie, Pride, Rice, Simpson, Smith, Todd, and Vaughn.