

603	63	66	Thomas Ben F	Head	m	58	2	16	Alabama	Tennessee	Tennessee	English	Restaurant	Proprietor	Emp	2	1	1	5	X
			Rebecca	Wife	f	58	2	16	Alabama	Virginia	Virginia	English	None							
712	64	67	Paul Hubbard	Head	m	44	2	20	Alabama	Mississippi	Mississippi	English	None	Labourer	W	2	1	2	1	0

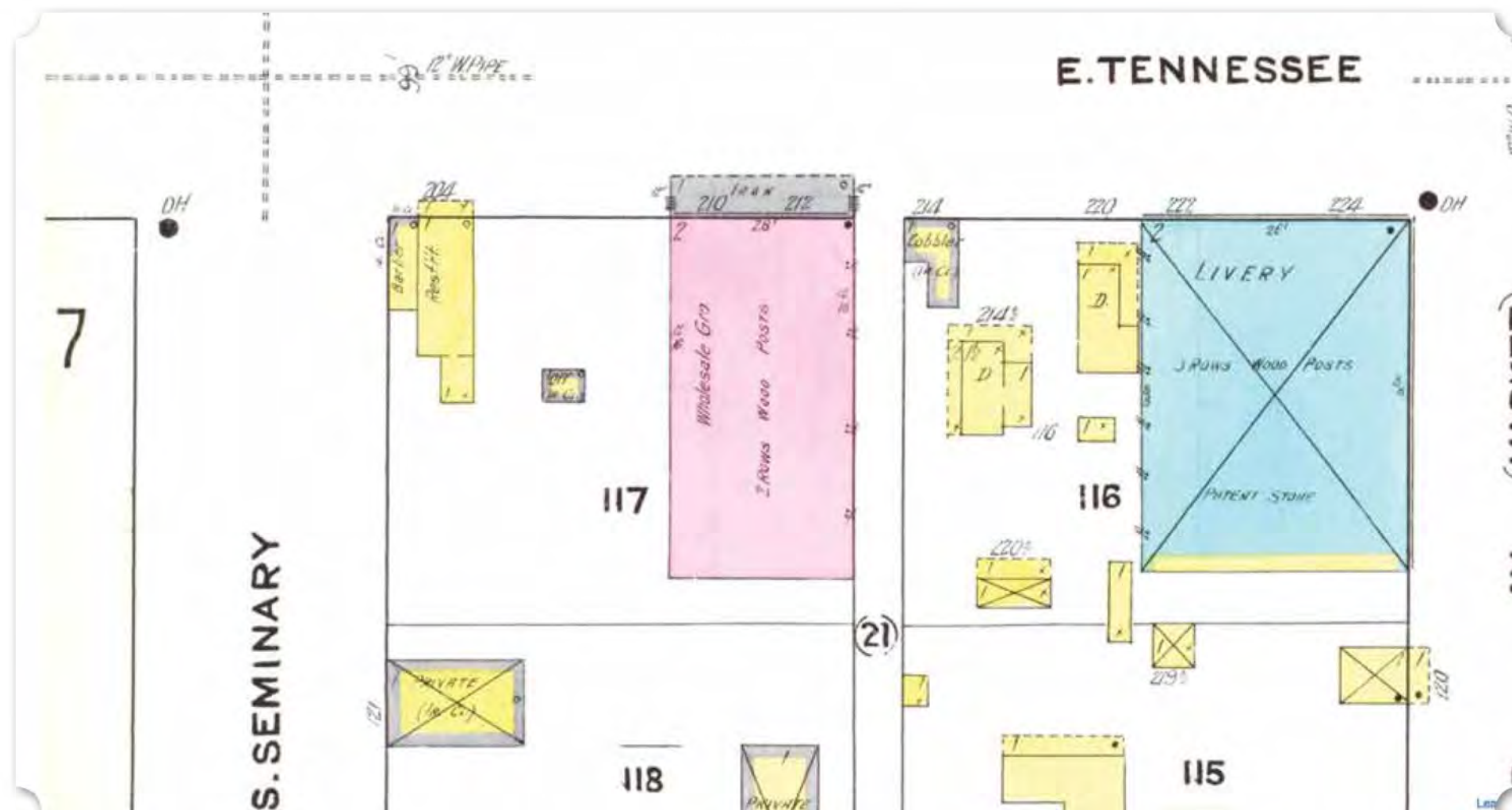
(Above) 1910 Census Record for Ben F. Thomas (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) (Right) Excerpt of Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Florence, Lauderdale County, Alabama, 1910. Showing the Likely Location of Mr. Thomas' Restaurant on the Corner of South Seminary and East Tennessee Streets (University of Alabama, Historical Map Collection, Online)

This block burned in 1891, and two years later, he passed away. Another of Florence's notable restaurateurs was John Taylor (died 1900). Little is known about Taylor other than his obituary in the *Florence Times* on November 9, 1900 which read "John Taylor, a worthy colored man who kept a restaurant and grocery on the corner of Court and Tombigbee streets, dropped dead in his place of business on Friday afternoon last in his little store. He was a worthy man and had the respect of all our people. His sensational death drew many people to the scene."

Ben F. Thomas (c. 1852-after 1910) also owned a restaurant in Florence. Originally a farmer, Mr. Thomas married Rebecca Rapier (1853-1918), the daughter of Florence barber John H. and Lucretia Rapier in 1890. By 1900, Mr. Thomas worked as a laborer on the Muscle Shoals Canal but is known to have opened a restaurant by 1906 on the corner of Tennessee and Seminary streets. On the 1910 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, there is a small restaurant next to a barber shop on the southeast corner; this is most likely Thomas' restaurant. There are two Ben F. Thomas' in Florence at the turn of the 20th century. This Mr. Thomas is on the 1910 census living in a house he owns on Alabama Street with his wife, Rebecca, and had no surviving children.

Undertakers and Funeral Homes

Due to the personal nature of the services provided and the segregation of cemeteries in Alabama after 1901, funeral homes for people of color, run by people of color became commonplace in the early 20th century. Each major town or city typically had at least one funeral home and



undertaker for people of color. A few funeral home services in North Alabama became the primary providers for nearly all people of color in the region: Royal Funeral Home in Madison County, and Thompson & Son Funeral Home in Colbert and Lauderdale counties. The first known undertaker in Florence for people of color was Mr. Henry M. O. Terry (1878-1936). Son to George W. Terry, Mr. Terry was a mortician and funeral director from at least 1910 until his own death in 1936. It appears that he worked and lived in the same location, which was not uncommon for funeral homes. In 1910, he and his wife, Josephine, were living with

Virgil Smith and his wife, Mollie, Josephine's sister. Terry is listed as "undertaker" and owner. By 1913, the Florence City Directory lists three undertakers, of which Terry is the only one of color. His business address is listed as 314 East Limestone Street, the same as the Smith house. In 1920, the census records Terry and his wife in their own home at 319 East Alabama Street, the same address given for his business in the city directory. The address changed to 323 Alabama Street in 1930, but this is more likely a renumbering rather than a physical move. Mr. Terry died on May 12, 1936 and is buried in the Florence City Cemetery.