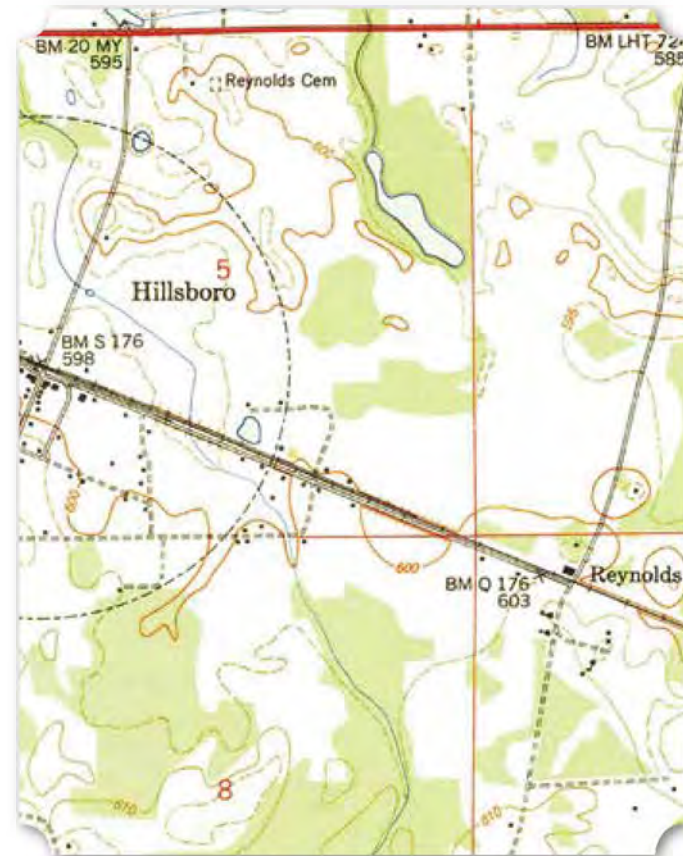


13

Hillsboro

The community and census district of Hillsboro has been majority African American since the early 20th century. In 1900, 57% of households were African American, the lowest percentage of families of color between 1900 and 1940. There was a small boom in the population of Hillsboro between 1900 and 1910 as the population rose from 305 to 355 total households, most of them were African American families. In that decade, 72% of households were African American. The more impressive boom was in the number of African American-owned farms. In 1900, 21 African Americans owned farms, but by 1910, Hillsboro had 71 African American landowners. By 1920, Hillsboro had 89 African American landowners. Yet in 1940, the number of farming landowners dropped by half.

(Below) 1936 USGS/TVA Topographic Map of Hillsboro, Hillsboro, Alabama Quadrangle (Top Right)
1951 USGS/TVA Topographic Map of Hillsboro, Hillsboro, Alabama Quadrangle (Bottom Right)
1974 USGS/TVA Topographic Map of Hillsboro, Hillsboro, Alabama Quadrangle



While the percentage of African American households remained at 72%, only 44 African Americans owned farms.

At least 175 individuals from 83 different families owned land in the Hillsboro district in the early 20th century between 1900 and 1940. Some of the most common surnames among landowners were Bankston, Davis, Owens, Jackson, and Baker. Each of these families had five members who owned farms between 1900 and 1940. The Smith family had seven landowning members, the Watkins had 10 landowning members, and the Elliott family had 14 landowning members. Most individuals owned a farm for less than the 10-year span between censuses, but many owned a farm for several decades. There were only six individuals who owned a farm from at least 1910 to 1940: John White, Pleas Rhodes, Horace Watkins, Henry and John Elliott, and Ben C. Britton. James Elliott may also have owned a farm from 1910 to 1940, but the record of ownership is unknown in 1920.

Hillsboro School (Rosenwald)*

The Hillsboro School was one of four Rosenwald Schools in Lawrence County. It was built in 1921 on a five-acre lot. The school had two rooms and cost \$3,400. A total of \$1,700 came from the African

(Below) Hillsboro School, Circa 1921 (Fisk University-Rosenwald Foundation Database)



American community, \$900 from public funds, and \$800 from the Rosenwald Fund. The location of the Rosenwald school has two possibilities. The first topographic map of the area from 1936 shows a symbol for a school within the town of Hillsboro at the corner of Oakdale Avenue and Marlow Road. This school could have been the Rosenwald school because it is no longer there in 1951 – about the time when rural African American schoolhouses were closing and consolidating.

A more likely location is in nearby Reynolds. The 1936 map also indicates an unnamed school located along Mallard Creek Road next to Mt. Olive Baptist Church and across the street from Tennessee Valley Junior High School. This is a possible location for the Rosenwald school because schools were often associated with churches, and the T.V.J – as it was abbreviated – was an African American school included in the school census records in 1930. The school in Reynolds is no longer there by 1974, which is not uncommon for African American schools after integration.

Tennessee Valley School*

The Tennessee Valley School was another school for African American students serving the higher grade levels. It dates to at least 1930 when it appears in the school census records. On the 1974 USGS map, the school is labeled as Tennessee Valley Junior High School. It is one of the few African American schools that survived integration. The grounds included a large gymnasium and baseball field with batting cages and bleachers. The school was rebuilt in 1961, and a plaque declared the building “Hillsboro School, 1961, Board of Education: P. A. Chenault – President, L. P. Hopkins – Vice President, Fred Crow, Ernest Gist, John M. Roberts (presumably trustees), Woodrow Burks – Superintendent, Northington Smith & Kranert – Architects, R.