

landowners in 1940, 18 of them were previously recorded as owning a farm in 1930; 12 of them had owned since 1920, and three of them since 1910. The retention of these farms speaks to the solid and deep roots of the community. The records do not take into account the transfer of a farm within the same family – from spouse to spouse or parent to child – and doing so may result in the identification of many more long-term landowners.

Among the landowning farmers in Moulton were Richard Harris Alexander (1855-1923) and Cora Lee Daniel Alexander (1880-1952). The Alexanders owned a farm in Moulton from at least 1910 to 1940. Richard Alexander was supposedly the grandson of a white slave owner from North Carolina who settled in Lawrence County by 1840. The slaves schedule from 1860 records William Wilburn Alexander (1803-1873) as the owner of at least 33 slaves. While Richard was born in 1855, it is unclear whether he was a slave or free. In 1900, Richard was 45 years old, single, and renting a farm in Moulton. About 1903, he married Cora, and they had at least seven children.



BOOKER T. ALEXANDER AT WORK

Noted basketweaver dies

Booker T. Alexander, a Moulton 3-basketweaver noted nationally for his folk skills, died Thursday in a Huntsville hospital.

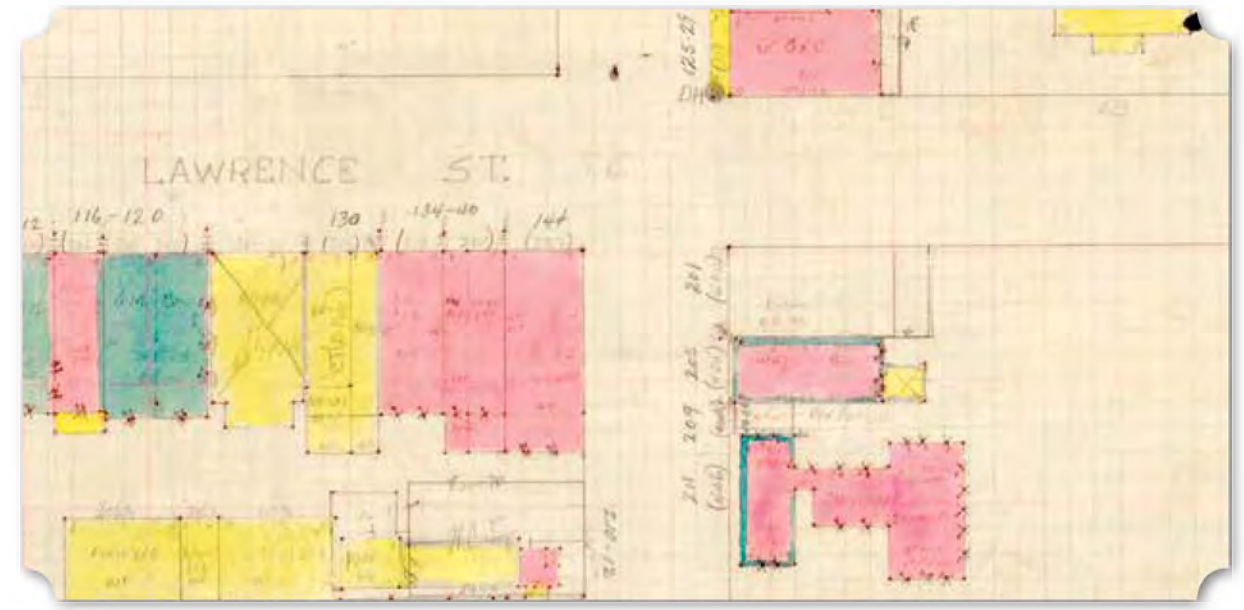
Alexander, 73, was a subject of a folk film produced by students at Calhoun Community College. The film was seen statewide, and Alexander was invited to demonstrate his skills at the National Folklife Festival in Washington.

Funeral for Alexander will be Monday at 11 a.m. at Freeman Tabernacle Baptist Church, the Rev. H. N. Snodgrass officiating, with burial in Moulton Cemetery. Reynolds Funeral Home direc-

ing. Survivors include a son, Richard T. Alexander, Moulton, two daughters, Mrs. Thelma Irene Young and Mrs. Bertha Carlean Young, both of Moulton; a stepdaughter, Mrs. Esther L. Lee, Cincinnati, Ohio; three sisters, Mrs. Magnolia Boyd, Mrs. Nettie Mae Wiggins, both of Aliquippa, Pa. and Mrs. Gracie Darty, Moulton; two brothers, Theodore Alexander, Aliquippa, Pa. and Leroy Alexander, Moulton; 13 grandchildren.

He was a member of the Freeman Tabernacle Baptist Church and Alpha Lodge No. 45 of Moulton.

(Left) Photograph of Cora Lee Daniels Alexander (Ancestry.com, User FINDNTHRESTOPME) (Above) Obituary for Booker T. Alexander, 1978 (Ancestry.com, User FINDNTHRESTOPME)



After Richard passed away in 1923, according to the census, Cora took on the ownership of the family farm. Her second oldest son, Booker T. Alexander (1905-1978) lived with her in 1930 and presumably helped to take care of the farm and the younger children. By 1940, Booker was the head of house after inheriting the farm on Decatur Highway in Moulton, where he lived with his wife, Hattie, their daughter, and his mother. Many of the Alexander family are laid to rest at the Moulton Cemetery, also known as the Freeman Tabernacle Cemetery, associated with the church the family attended.

After vying for the position with Courtland, the most populous town until the early 20th century, Moulton became the seat of Lawrence County. As the seat, Moulton has ties to other early North Alabama cities, such as Huntsville. The historic African American community of Moulton is prevalent in a section southeast of downtown around Byler and Pinhook roads, where there are several community landmarks including Freeman Tabernacle Baptist Church,

(Above) Excerpt of Downtown Moulton, Alabama Inspection and Rating Bureau, 1939 (Alabama Department of Archives & History via University of Alabama Historic Map Collection, Online)

Smith Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church and Cemetery, Moulton Cemetery, and the old Moulton Negro High School. Most of these landmarks have roots dating back to Emancipation and before. One of the local plantation owners, Isaac Nabors Owens, is said to have given property to both the Methodist and Baptist communities of color for the purpose of building a church and schoolhouse. The congregations held services together until 1874. Afterwards, the Methodist organization was able to purchase the land and church that is now Smith Chapel CME Church, named for former pastor, Rev. Andrew Smith. The Freeman Tabernacle Baptist Church was named for Rev. John Harrison Freeman, who came to Moulton in the 1870s. Along with the formation of a church, Freeman opened the first school for children of color in Moulton.

Downtown Moulton is home to the county archives. On the southeast corner of the main square, at Lawrence and Main streets, is the old Moulton Bank. The Lawrence County Historical Society maintains the archives and displays several pieces of Lawrence County history, including that of the African American community.