

areas in the county, including Courtland and Red Bank, the African American community tends to live toward the river. The census data for 1900 and 1910 did not divide the district during enumeration, but the segregation becomes apparent in 1920.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the community of Town Creek was still relatively small with 366 total households, 38% of which were African American. The population dropped by 330 households in 1910, but the African American population rose to 56%. The 1920 census shows that nearly all of the people of color lived north of the railroad. There were 505 households in Town Creek in 1920, 149 of which were African American. Only 3 African American families lived on the south side of the railroad tracks.

By 1930, a few more families of color were on the south side, but not many: 85% of African American families lived on the north side and only 15% on the south side. Some of the community of color had taken up residence inside the town limits by 1940, but the ratio of north and south held. Town Creek had a total of 623 households in 1940, enumerated by north and south of the railroad and within the town limits. On the north side were 121 (67%) African American households of a total of 180 north side households. On the south side, there were 270 households, only 35 (13%) of them were African American. Within the town limits, 18% of the 173 households were African American.

**(Opposite Page) (First)** Excerpt of 1920 Census Record Showing John Williams Owning a Farm (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) **(Second)** Excerpt of 1940 Census Record Showing Ed Fitzgerald Owning a Farm (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) **(Third)** Excerpt of 1940 Census Record Showing Frank Fitzgerald Owning a Farm (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) **(Fourth)** Excerpt of 1920 Census Record Showing Louis Johnson Owning a Farm (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) **(Fifth)** Excerpt of 1930 Census Record Showing O. C. Stanley Owning a Farm (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) **(Sixth)** Excerpt of 1940 Census Record Showing O. C. Stanley Owning a Farm (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com)

As for landowners in the Town Creek area, only a small percentage of total households were African American-owned farms. In 1900, there were 16 landowning farmers in all of Town Creek. Family names included Burt, Jones, Burns, Johnson, Lee, and Allen. There were 20 landowners by the 1910 census. For 1920, the census breaks Town Creek down into north and south. There was only one landowner - John Williams - on the south side of the tracks. On the north side, there were 13 landowners. There are only 11 total African American landowners in the area, in 1930. The record of landowners in 1940 indicates that the majority of African Americans in Town Creek lived along the railroad rather than to one side or the other. There are 11 African American-owned farms on either side of the railroad and some of the owners on the south side were previously recorded on the north side.

Long-term owners north of the railroad include Ed and Frank Fitzgerald, who each owned a farm since at least 1920, and Louis (Lewis) Johnson owned a farm from at least 1910 to 1940. On the south side, four of the 11 farms are owned by the Jones family, a group of two brothers and two sons. Champ J. Jones was 100 years old and owned his farm since at least 1900. He passed his skills on to his sons, Frank and James, who own adjacent farms. Champ's brother Alfred lived next to them. He owned his farm since at least 1910.

#### O. C. Stanley Grocery & Service Station

In 2017, the first African American owned business received a historical marker - O.C. Stanley Grocery and Service Station. Mr. O.C. Stanley (1904-1987) lived on the county line between Lawrence and Colbert counties. In 1921, he opened the first business owned by a person of color in all of Town Creek and the surrounding community. His grocery store is said to have sold eggs for 10 cents a dozen, meat for 10 cents a pound, and 25-pound bags of flour for 50 cents. Stanley expanded his business to include dry cleaning and taxi services. The original building burned, and two separate buildings were constructed. The new dry cleaners was called City Cleaners.

Mr. O.C. Stanley was very active in his community. He was a Baptist minister for at least three churches in the area before he built the First Baptist Church of Leighton in 1937. He married Elsie King of Leighton and bought a farm north of Leighton in the Brick district. O.C. - or "Ocie" - and his wife are on the 1930 and 1940 census in Brick, Colbert County as owning a farm. Besides businessman, minister, and farmer, Stanley was also a Freemason, and his wife was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star. He was a trustee of the North Alabama Baptist Academy and a charter member of the Valleywide Improvement Association of Courtland.

“My dad went to World War II... coming home... he obtained a job at TVA. He was a great provider. We didn't know we were really poor, but my mom let us know. We had the first car. My dad bought a brand new car when I was young. Brand new every year. Every other year seemed as though he brought home a new car”

- Ms. Carolyn Wilson

