

density. Towns in North Alabama are typically majority white population, presumably, for two reasons. One, because the majority of people of color in the South rely on agriculture as their primary profession. Two, because towns consist of homes built close together and are often owned or rented by people who have a profession other than farming. Although there are certainly white families that farm, when looking for a community of color spatially, it may appear to have a rural/urban divide based on race. Examples of North Alabama towns that have nearly or completely white town centers surrounded by segregated rural areas include Harvest in Madison County, Moulton in Lawrence County, and Rogersville in Lauderdale County.

Large, contemporary cities typically have a more diverse urban center than the small towns of the rural South. While big northern cities like Chicago, along with some of the more substantial southern cities like Atlanta, have large populations of people of color at their core, this is not the case for the smaller, rural towns of North Alabama. In this area, the largest cities are Huntsville, Decatur, and the Quad-Cities, which have neighborhoods of color, but not a majority of African Americans. Huntsville is the largest city in the area and as of 2010 had a population of nearly one-third (31.2%) African American. Due to housing sanctions and redlining over the past century, cities tend to have distinct predominately African American neighborhoods. Examples of these neighborhoods in North Alabama include the southeast portions of Tusculumbia and Sheffield in Colbert County, Old Town and West Decatur in Morgan County, the Canaan neighborhood of Florence in Lauderdale County, and multiple neighborhoods in north and west Huntsville in Madison County.

Oddly, the institutionalized racism prevalent in the early 20th century can be of use to a researcher. The obsession with race led land surveyors, TVA case workers, city directories, and census records to denote people of color in some fashion. Land records, like today's tax parcel data, are maps recording who owns what land. Most, but not all, modern records are now computerized and use satellite images and other technologies. In the 19th and 20th centuries, these maps were hand drawn – sometimes poorly. Madison County has these records online, however,

most counties have their land maps in large bound books at their county archive, library, or courthouse. The older maps all use the Public Land Survey System which maps using Townships and Ranges. Some counties, such as Morgan County, signify people of color by writing “col” next to the person's name. Although Madison County's records do not overtly indicate race, a common trend appears among female landowners. It seems that white female landowners are referred to as “Mrs.” So-and-so, while women of color in the land records are simply referred to by their name without an honorific. This may be an example of unconscious prejudice. Akin to the “col” written in the land records, city directories, which work similarly to phone books or the Yellow Pages, commonly denote people of color with a “(c)” or an asterisk symbol (\*). Other times, the services offered in a city, like shoemaker or dentist, or public places, like churches and schools, are listed separately under “Colored.”

Naturally, the census recorded people's race as it does still, ostensibly in order to understand the demographics of an area and to fairly allocate necessary funds and government services. In the historic censuses, people of African American descent were recorded with different names. In 1900, African Americans were referred to as “black;” in 1910 and 1920, someone was either “black” or “mulatto,” a light-skinned or mixed-race person; in 1930 and 1940, African Americans were referred to as “negro.” The handwritten census records can sometimes be difficult to interpret, but with repetition and practice, it becomes clearer. One thing commonly found on the census of 1930 and 1940 is the use of only a man's initials in lieu of his first and middle names. While white men are known to have done this as well, the use of initials were a particularly poignant and conscious decision on the part of men of color. In the 19th century, a common form of degradation towards people of color was to call married or older men and women “uncle” and “aunt” instead of “Mr.” and “Mrs.” This was hardly a step back from calling men of color “boy,” as they were called during slavery. If a man of color's first name was known, he may be disrespected by being referred to as simply “John” or “Uncle John.” But if only his last name was known, he would be referred to as “Mr. Smith.” Therefore, our imaginary John Smith would record his name as J. Smith on the census and other documents. A quiet and clever form of resistance against racism and discrimination.

## Segregation & Discrimination in North Alabama

The South, particularly at the turn-of-the-20th-century, was poorer and more agricultural than the rest of the country. The Tennessee Valley was acutely economically depressed even before the stock market crashed in 1929. The depleted and eroded soils of the valley flooded unpredictably and therefore consisted of the most undesirable land. In North Alabama, the valley and its floodplain contain many communities of color – a legacy of the once prime farmland dotted with plantations. The hilly region south of the valley and the foothills of the Appalachians to the east are not conducive to plantation agriculture and therefore had few plantations and later few communities of color. In general, the communities of color of North Alabama are located along the Tennessee River, in the northern half of Colbert, Lawrence, and Morgan counties and Marshall County to an extent; and the southern half of Lauderdale, Limestone, Madison, and Jackson counties. DeKalb County, running along a mountainous ridge and with the majority of its floodplain in Jackson County, has little history of communities of color.

Those communities of North Alabama with a population of people of color typically exhibit the usual segregation based on either the rural/urban divide or the directional – north/south, east/west – divide often along a railroad or major highway. Some of the larger towns or cities of North Alabama have distinct neighborhoods that house communities of color. Decatur in Morgan County is an example of a city and a railroad divide. Decatur's original platted city is situated on the river with the railroad splitting the downtown from the old residential area. By the 1880s, “New Decatur,” later called Albany, was developed to the southeast of downtown. The original town became known as “Old Town” and as white residents were drawn to New Decatur, prominent African American families took up residence in the neighborhood north and west of the railroad tracks. Also in Morgan County, Hartselle is an example of a railroad divide as well as a rural/urban divide. The city of Hartselle is the second densest area in the county after Decatur, however, in the early 20th century it never had more than 20% African American households. Within the city, the majority of households of color in 1940